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# *Translatio Studiorum*

Ancient, Medieval and Modern Bearers  
of Intellectual History

*Edited by*  
Marco Sgarbi



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*Cover illustration:* Albrecht Dürer's *Philosophia*, inspired by Boëthius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. Four famous wise men (Plato, Ptolemy, Cicero or Virgil, Albert the Great) represent the four epochs of the splendor of philosophy and of the transmission of knowledge. Illustration from Konrad Celtis, *Quattuor libri amorum* (Nuremberg: Hieronymus Hölzel, 1502). Woodcut 217 × 147. Photo: Warburg Institute.

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PREFACE

TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Marco Sgarbi

*In memoriam Claudio Leonardi*

Intellectual history incorporates a range of different methodologies. The history of problems, for instance, is based on the idea that problems form the core of the history of thought. Problems, indeed, may be seen to represent “the transcendental condition of thinking”.<sup>1</sup> The history of problems is, however, still anchored to the Platonic-Idealistic standpoint according to which problems—and likewise ideas in the history of ideas—are eternal entities that assume various expressions in history. In opposition to the history of problems, Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued in favor of the history of concepts, pointing out that problems are so broad and general that it is not possible to find any determinate solution, or else that it is possible to find infinite solutions.<sup>2</sup> As Gadamer says:

It is from the life of language, which is continuously operating, that philosophy issues. It does not only intend to clarify historically certain concepts, but to renew the tension of thinking manifest in the breakpoints of philosophical linguistic use, in which the effort of the concept is ‘refuted’. These ‘refusals’, in which the relation between the term and the concept is broken and everyday words are artificially transformed into new conceptual expressions, are the authentic legitimization of the history of concepts as philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

Breakpoints—tensions of thought—provide the problems from which philosophical reflections issue. The answers to philosophical problems are always conceptual and they mutate in the course of time. In this sense the history of problems cannot be properly understood without the history of concepts. Concepts, however, do not have an independent life: they are mediated by linguistic expressions and only from these expressions

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<sup>1</sup> See Nicolai Hartmann, “Zur Methode der Philosophiegeschichte,” *Kant-Studien* 15 (1909), 459–85.

<sup>2</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), II, 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 90. Translation is mine.

do they have their specific meaning. Their lexicographical investigation is therefore indispensable and unavoidable for determining both the conceptual apparatus and the philosophical problems.

Problems, concepts, and terms unequivocally characterize a philosophical tradition. A philosophical tradition could be considered as a set of coherent doctrines or ideas that always remains the same, even if it changes its outward expressions in the course of time. From this perspective, a history of a tradition would be the history of the hidden or manifest traces of doctrines and thoughts that form a precise and distinct theoretical unity. Writing the history of a tradition would mean finding the continuous and gradual transition of different intellectual doctrines from what proceeds to what follows. This kind of history, however, neutralizes the specificity and originality of the intellectual product: it neglects its identity and is comprehended within the doctrines of a specific tradition. That would make the history of a tradition the history of an artificial continuity that historians elaborate at their discretion.

A better method of understanding the history of an idea or a tradition is to investigate the *translatio studiorum*, as an act fully implicit in the most rudimentary communication, and fully explicit in the coexistence and interaction of the thousands of spoken languages and lived cultures.<sup>4</sup>

This volume collects some of the peer-reviewed papers that were presented at the Tenth International Society for Intellectual History Conference, held in Verona in May 2009—papers on the theme of “*Translatio Studiorum*: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Bearers of Intellectual History.” Looking at intellectual history from the point of view of the *translatio studiorum* means emphasizing the breakpoints, the refusals, and the transformation of language, concepts, and problems within specific traditions. Understandings and misunderstandings of past literature, philosophy, art, religion and science have shaped the European cultures and helped to shape other civilizations.<sup>5</sup> Writing the history of a tradition, including its language, concepts, and problems, involves not only recognizing common intellectual elements, but also identifying new and original elements within the tradition itself. For this reason, intellectual history cannot ignore the *translatio studiorum*; an account of the ways in which cultural patrimony is transmitted so as to generate new forms of knowledge, from

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Georg Steiner, *After Babel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 471.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and Salvatore Settis, *Preface*, in Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and Salvatore Settis (eds.), *The Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010), VI.

Athens to Rome, from Rome to Paris, from Paris to Oxford, to Florence, to Padua, to Lisbon, to the Americas, to becoming widespread throughout the world via the technologies of the internet.

If communication between languages and cultures is usually assumed and accepted as an evident fact in our contemporary digitalized world, it was by no means self-evident in the past. Indeed, all major cultural and intellectual exchanges in history are based on certain kind of translation. In particular, it was Europe that “represented the scene of the most sustained and intense cultural transfers throughout its long history, a process marked by an enormous effort in translation: of religious, scientific, political and literary works from a large variety of vernaculars into Latin and vice versa, and of vernaculars crossing national and linguistic boundaries.”<sup>6</sup>

The study of the *translatio studiorum* has been largely neglected by intellectual historians and only in the last decade have we been able to contribute to a reappraisal of the topic. The present volume collects case studies that characterize the various kinds of *translationes* within European culture of the last two and a half millennia, and in particular in the history of philosophy. As Tullio Gregory argues in his introductory essay, every intellectual identity has established itself by means of a continuous translation and rethinking of previous meanings—a sequence of translations and transformation in the transmission of knowledge from one intellectual context to another. Gregory provides a breathtaking account of a wide range of texts from ancient Greece to Rome, from the Medieval world to the Renaissance. He shows the *translatio studiorum* as a continuous transposition of texts, of their rewriting, of their translations, of their interpretation, and of their metamorphosis, all of which are crucial to intellectual history.

After Gregory’s introductory essay, the book is divided into three parts, each of which is devoted to a particular period of time in which the *translatio studiorum* has been particularly effective.

The first part on ancient *translatio studiorum* includes the papers presented by Emidio Spinelli, Francesco Verde, and Rita Salis. Spinelli examines communicative strategies in the mutual relationship between philosophy, ethics, and science in the ancient world, investigating the

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia, *Introduction*, in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.

case study of the transmission of Epicurean doctrines. Epicurus's philosophy shows—behind the systematic links between a coherent and precise physical account of the world and the moral flavor of a goal or *telos* truly at the disposal of human beings—the necessity of a special re-contextualization (or *translatio*, indeed) linked to the most relevant points of an atomistic theory and settled on the strategic skills indispensable to granting the efficacy of a reliable communication of such doctrines. Verde argues that Strato's philosophy plays an important role within the early Peripatetic tradition on account of his discussion of aspects of Aristotle's *Physics*. The paper focuses particularly on the problem of time, examining both Strato's criticism of the Aristotelian use of the concept of number (*arithmos*) in the explanation of time and his definition of *chronos* as quantity (*poson*), with the aim of defining Strato's concept of time and of assessing whether—and to what extent—it is actually possible to talk of a controversy between Aristotle and Strato. Salis in her work supports the thesis that the problem relating to the origin of the concept of *actus essendi* constitutes one of the central topics in the history of ancient philosophy for the *translatio studiorum*. She shows that the idea of *actus essendi* had already been present in Neoplatonism well before Thomas Aquinas's elaboration.

Claudio Leonardi's paper opens the section devoted to the medieval *translatio studiorum*. He argues that while the transmission of texts is not equivalent to the transmission of studies, the *translatio textuum* does coincide with the *translatio studiorum*. Giacinta Spinosa's article clarifies a number of points regarding the idea of *translatio studiorum* in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, arguing that a *translatio studiorum* can also be seen in the changes that occur within the philosophical terminology of medieval Greek-Latin translations. Jacqueline Hamesse's paper shows that the Latin translations of Greek, Arabic, or Hebrew works were not the only bearers of the *translatio studiorum* in the Middle Ages. The new translations that arrived in the Latin West were an instant success, but the transmission of sufficient copies to satisfy the needs of academics and intellectuals was gradual and, even when copies were available, not everyone could have access to them for economic reasons. High prices for manuscripts meant that even rich libraries could not claim to have available all the works that their readers wanted. Hamesse reconstructs the various solutions in the Middle Ages for providing access to texts, especially the use of *auctoritates*, which were an integral part of the scholastic method.

The early modern *translatio studiorum* section includes papers by Eva Del Soldato, Constance Blackwell, and Gregorio Piaia. Del Soldato argues that despite Alfred North Whitehead's famous statement that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato," the affirmation of Platonism in the early modern era was particularly difficult. In the first half of the fifteenth century, Plato was in fact still little known or misunderstood in the western world and the Aristotelian tradition was predominant. However, the problem was the complete absence of a direct and correct knowledge of the Platonic texts. Del Soldato contends that good translations were therefore a decisive instrument in bridging that gap, claiming that the decisive fifteenth-century western conflict over Platonism, which involved personalities such as Cardinal Bessarion and George of Trebizond, can be read and interpreted as a real battle of translations. Blackwell, meanwhile, contests the thesis proposed by Richard Popkin, according to which the "methodical doubt" of Pierre Charron was linked to the traditions of skepticism and fideism. She suggests that Charron follows the sixteenth-century Aristotelian tradition, in which questioning and doubting were turned into a method that—by eliminating topics and wrong methods of thinking—gave him the freedom to construct his own version of philosophy. Piaia argues that the transmission, reconstruction, and interpretation of the philosophies of the past are the most important aspect of the wider concept of *translatio studiorum*. He focuses his attention on a number of decisive moments of transition in the genesis of modern philosophical historiography, from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. In this process a key role was played by action and reaction between the historical materials of philosophy, handed down from antiquity, and the affirmation of Descartes's *nouvelle philosophie* with its claim to start from scratch, hence denying the very idea of a *translatio studii*. Piaia contends that in this way the first forms of a historicization of philosophy were born, leading to the creation of an outline of a "critical history," which positioned itself as a synthesis between the erudite historiography of the seventeenth century—a legacy of the Renaissance—and the *esprit critique* professed by Descartes.

Marta Fattori's paper deals with the metaphor *dealbare ethiopem* as a perfect case of *translatio* at the origin of modernity. She shows that the proverbial saying "whitening the Ethiopian," can be interpreted as a category of the impossible and that, as a proverb on impossibility, the expression "whitening the Ethiopian" runs throughout classical history,

from Greek to Latin culture. It is found in holy texts up to and including the medieval revival, the Renaissance and later. *Dealbare ethiopem* was translated into vernacular languages, and naturally became richer, its meaning evolving along the complex intercultural routes it travelled. Vasiliki Grigoropoulou's paper is devoted to *translatio*-issue in the thought of Descartes, which she considers under the perspective of what can be literally understood as corporeal transfer. She shows that the subject of death has been a source of philosophical *aporia* from which arose the question of whether "death is an evil" and the question of what death is: whether or not it represents the annihilation of existence and the soul, what the soul is, what is its relation to the body, and whether the soul survives after death. She argues that the subject of death is not merely a matter of concern for each person; the stance adopted towards it is of central importance in moral philosophy. Totaro deals in her paper with the problem of eternity in Spinoza, which touches the question of translation and preservation of texts in the fields of ethics, logic, epistemology, ontology and theology. She argues that only through the convergence of these different levels of reading can we look at eternity as the definitive result of an analysis of human cognitive structures, particularly the intellect. Hans-michael Hohenegger's paper offers a comprehensive and systematic overview of the influence of Rousseau's thought on the development of Kant's philosophy. He does not analyze *where* but *how* Rousseau is a source for Kant, and in particular, what kind of source. Valerio Rocco Lozano deals with two important deviations from Platonic thought that can be found in Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*. The first concerns the absence of subjective freedom in the *Republic* and the second Plato's philosophy of nature in the *Timaeus*. In order to account for Plato's doctrine of a mathematical analogy that steers the creation of the world, Rocco Lozano points out that Hegel includes his own theory of syllogism, thereby incurring an obviously unacceptable claim: the notion of syllogism has indeed only existed since Aristotle. He explains that Hegel's awareness of this historical evidence was probably outweighed here by his desire to identify Plato as his predecessor and to appropriate his philosophy—a strategy that requires a certain amount of reinterpretation.

The section on contemporary *translatio studiorum* includes the papers by Martin Burke and Riccardo Pozzo. Burke considers some of the ways in which academics, primarily Americans, have engaged with *Begriffsgeschichte* in their research and writing. Compared to other milieus on which *Begriffsgeschichte* has had a considerable impact, its influence in

the United States has been more circumscribed. Nonetheless, Burke shows that historians, political scientists and philosophers have made use of its empirical and interpretive materials. He demonstrates that in spite of the relative absence of projects on the history of concepts, the methodological importance of historical semantics has been acknowledged in a variety of disciplinary arenas, and discusses a number of other methodological approaches, which, if employed in conjunction with historical semantics, could serve to enhance the practice of intellectual history. In the final essay of this volume, Riccardo Pozzo argues that European intellectual specialization, coordination, and credibility contrast with monolingual cultures, which were shaped without any form of *translatio studiorum*. The notion of *translatio studiorum* must, according to Pozzo, be one of the keys to innovative approaches to the history of ideas, which considers the development of cultural terminologies and transdisciplinary ideas arising from the need to establish the continuity of a cultural tradition by transcribing it to completely new contexts.





## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CONSTANCE BLACKWELL is Research Fellow, Department of History, Birkbeck College, University of London (retired). For over thirty years she has promoted the field of Intellectual History, President of the *Foundation for Intellectual History* (1989–2012); a founding member of the *International Society for Intellectual History* (1993), on the Boards of the *Society for Renaissance Studies* 1984–87) and *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1990–2012). She was editor of *Intellectual News* 1–16 (autumn 1996–2010). She has published over twenty papers on various aspects of the historiography of philosophy and edited the translation into English of Giovanni Santinello's *Models of the History of the Philosophy* (1993, vol. 1) and edited, *Philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Conversations with Aristotle*, with Sachiko Kusukawa.(1999). Her articles range from identifying why a respected 17th century Catholic philosopher, Honoré Fabri, was written out of the history of philosophy to explaining the importance of *de primo cognito* debates to the history of philosophy. In addition she has explored the historiography of skepticism, epicurianism, and the pre-Socratics, Thales and Parmenides. Her interest in skepticism has led her to identify the source of what Richard Popkin called *methodical doubt*, and Tullio Gregory named *sagesse sceptique* as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 3,1, and her research on early 18th German philosophy has pointed to an overlooked origin of the history of philosophy.

MARTIN J. BURKE is Professor of History and American Studies at Lehman College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Among his publications are *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America* (Chicago, 1995); "Conceptual History in the United States: a Missing National Project," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 2 (2005); "Intellectuals and Anti-Intellectualism in Twentieth-century American Public Discourse," *Intellectual News* (2006); "Histories of Concepts and Histories of Ideas: Practices and Prospects," in *Eine Typologie der Formen der Begriffsgeschichte*, eds. R. Pozzo and M. Sgarbi (Meiner Verlag, 2010); and *Why Concepts Matter: Translating Social and Political Thought* (Brill, 2012) with Melvin Richter. He has been a Fulbright Junior Lecturer at the Università degli Studi di Firenze and a Fulbright Senior

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VASILIKI GRIGOROPOULOU teaches Philosophy at the University of Athens. Her area of specialty is Modern Philosophy; she is the author of *Γνώση, πάθη και πολιτική στη φιλοσοφία του Σπινόζα* (*Knowledge, Passions and Politics in Spinoza's Philosophy*), Athens, 1999 and *Αγωγή και πολιτική στον Rousseau* (*Education and Politics in Rousseau*), Athens, 2002. She is also the editor of *Spinoza, Πραγματεία για τη διόρθωση του νου* (*Spinoza. Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*), Athens, 2001, 3rd edition 2005, and the co-editor of *Spinoza: Προς την ελευθερία* (*Spinoza: Towards Freedom*), Axiologika, Athens, 2002; the editor of J.-J. Rousseau, *Το κοινωνικό συμβόλαιο* (*Du contrat social*), Athens, 2004 and also of Descartes, *Οι αρχές της φιλοσοφίας I & II* (*Principia Philosophiae*), Introduction, trans. and notes, Athens, 2012. She is the author of *Γεωμετρία και δύναμη. Εισαγωγή στην Ηθική του Spinoza* (*Geometry and Power: Introduction to Spinoza's Ethics*), Athens, 2009 and she has published numerous articles on Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke and Rousseau. She has been a visiting scholar at the Universities of Pittsburgh, Cambridge and Princeton.

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## TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM

Tullio Gregory

In *After Babel*, George Steiner pointed out that every culture has come to be by means of a continuous translation and rewriting of preceding meanings, a sequence of translations and transformations. He stressed the relevance of the continuous passage of linguistic signs from one context to another.<sup>1</sup> Taking this point of view, I will talk of *translatio studiorum* as a continuous transposition of texts—texts considered in the widest meaning. I will refer to traditions consisting of rewritings, translations, interpretations, and metamorphoses. I will not attempt in this paper to provide any privileged approach, as the forms of cultural exchange through the centuries are manifold (one has only to think of history and the transposition of myths and images or of figurative and architectural models). I will try instead to reconstruct certain moments in the translation of written texts from one geographic, political and linguistic context to another within the horizon and the limits of the formation of European culture, in respect to which *translationes* have often been the mark of crisis and palingenesis.

In fact, many centuries before the first occurrence of the syntagm *translatio studiorum*, a mythical and historical awareness was recorded of a set of continuous encounters, trespasses, and insertions among a variety of cultures that have turned out to be the vital lymph of that tradition and have found expression in the varying fortunes of the texts themselves. Everybody remember Critias's tale, based on ancient traditions, from the opening of Plato's *Timaeus*. What interests us here is not only the myth of the island of Atlantis—the subject of many interpretations—but first and foremost the notion of a reciprocal exchange between Egypt and Greece under the symbolic protection of the same goddess, whose Egyptian name was Neith and in Greek Athena.<sup>2</sup> If it is true that Greek civilization is older—a thousand years older than Egypt's. It is also true, Critias's Egyptian interlocutor says, that the Greeks have lost the memory of it during

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<sup>1</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 449; see also Gianfranco Folena, *Volgarizzare e tradurre* (Torino: Einaudi, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 21 c et seq.

their periodic, cosmic cataclysms, because they did not save any written evidence. The Egyptians—the fertility of whose soil exempted them from periodic destruction—have preserved in their own “sacred texts” a record of what the Greeks had achieved in the domains of political organization and the sciences, thereby becoming their heirs and imitators.<sup>3</sup> It is precisely this access to written memories that makes Egypt in the time of Solon the site from which the Greeks can recover an awareness of their own history and rediscover their own lost wisdom. Written texts are thus the vehicle of a *translatio* from the Greeks to the Egyptians and back again.

The story of *Timaeus* reflects an issue of considerable concern in classical Greece, which became quite crucial in the age of Hellenism, namely the relationship of the Greeks to the barbarians—especially the Egyptians and the Persians. The issue, already central in Herodotus, was outlined by Plato in the *Epinomis*—“whatever Greeks acquire from the barbarians is finally turned by them into something beautiful and perfect”<sup>4</sup>—and would find further definition in the Hellenistic myths about relations between the custodians of Egypt’s secret wisdom, the Persian “magicians,” the prophets of Israel and the Greek philosophers, which culminates in the myth of the “Hellenized magicians” descending from Zoroaster. The East and the West, sacred and profane history, find their embodiment in his figure of a magician and philosopher, prophet and astrologer. There was the fable of Pythagoras as a disciple of Zoroaster, who was, incidentally, identified with various biblical characters, leading to the formulation of a continuous lineage from Zoroaster to Plato—a sequence of reincarnations of the same spirit over a six-millennium span.<sup>5</sup> A parallel myth is found in Judaic and proto-Christian contexts about the continuity between the Egyptian-educated Moses and Plato, a “Greek-speaking Moses,”<sup>6</sup> and about Greek

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 23 a, c–e.

<sup>4</sup> Luciano Canfora, *Storia della letteratura greca* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), 277; *Epinomis*, 987 d–e.

<sup>5</sup> See Joseph Bidez-Franz Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque* (Paris: Pardès, 1973<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> Numenius, *Fragments* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), fr. 8, 51. See also Philo Alexandrinus, *De vita Mosis*, 21–24. See *Acta Ap.*, 7, 22: “Et eruditus est Moyses omni sapientia Aegyptiorum.” See the interpretation of *Exod.*, 21–22; 11, 2; 12, 35 in Augustine: “Philosophi autem qui vocantur, si qua forte vera et fidei nostrae accommodata dixerunt, maxime Platonici, non solum formidanda non sunt, sed ab eis etiam tamquam ab iniustus possessoribus in usum nostrum vindicanda. Sicut enim Aegyptii non tantum idola habebant et onera gravia, quae populus Israel detestaretur et fugeret, sed etiam vasa atque ornamenta de auro et de argento et vestem, quae ille populus exiens de Aegypto sibi potius tamquam ad usum

philosophers being disciples of the prophets of Israel. The same cultural context gives shape to the divine Hermes Trismegistus. Late hermetic writings even insist on the notion of an ancient sapiential tradition passed from people to people, and civilization to civilization. This melting pot of diverse experiences and myths sets the scene for the theme of the *translatio studiorum*, which is variously connected with the *translatio imperii*. The succession of reigns is also the succession of cultures, the former and the latter being placed under the protection and guidance of the great astral conjunctions.

It is not only Daniel's interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar that inspires the theme of the historical succession of the reigns:<sup>7</sup> the *translatio*, which constitutes the axis of ancient historical thought, is submitted to the translation of the celestial chronocrats, which by means of the coming up and down of their regular motions mark the time of the succession of cultures. If Aristotle had laid the metaphysical foundation of the determining influence of the heavens on the history of mankind by marking its rhythmical periodicity and eternal return, later astrological science would establish the process of civilization by setting precise correspondences: "Prima origo mundi inculta fuit et horrida et agresti conversatione efferata." This is the beginning of the cyclical *cursus humani generis*, which, from its primitive feral stage ("inhumana feritatis exasperatione") under the conjunction of the Moon with Saturn, sets off for the gradual conquest of more refined mores ("cultior vita hominis") until the last conjunction with Mercury, when "Purgatis agrestibus studiis, repertis artibus disciplinisque compositis per diversos actus humani se generis exacuit intentio."<sup>8</sup>

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meliores clanculo vindicavit, non auctoritate propria, sed praecepto Dei" (*De doctrina cristiana*, II, 40).

<sup>7</sup> *Dan.*, 2, 31ff.

<sup>8</sup> Iulii Firmici Materni *Matheseos libri VIII* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1968), I, 94–95: "Volverunt Lunam <ita> constituere, ut primum se Saturno coniungeret eique temporum traderet principatum, nec inmerito; quia enim prima origo mundi inculta fuit et horrida et agresti conversatione efferata, et quia rudes homines prima et incognita sibi vestigia lucis ingressos politae humanitatis ratio deserebat, Saturni hoc agreste et horridum tempus esse voluerunt. . . . Post Saturnum Iuppiter accepit temporum potestatem (nam huic secundo loco Luna coniungitur), ut deserto pristini squaloris horrore et agrestis conversationis feritate seposita cultior vita hominum purgatis moribus redderetur. Tertio vero loco Marti se Luna coniungens ei temporum tradidit potestatem, ut rectum vitae iter ingressa mortalitas et iam humanitatis quadam moderatione composita omnia artium ac fabricationum ornamenta conciperet. Post Martem dominandi Venus tempus accepit; et quia per gradua crescens hominum disciplina etiam prudentiae ornamenta concepit, hoc tempus, quo mores hominum sermo doctus excoluit et quo homines singularum disciplinarum naturali

In Arabic culture, the history of religions and their reciprocal relations are also read alongside the succession of the great conjunctions, deriving from the latter the characteristics of the former. Christian astrology would make of the horoscope of religions a useful tool for interpreting sacred history. What interests us, however, is not so much the cosmic references (their importance notwithstanding) of the theme of the *translatio*, but its textual and linguistic aspects. We are concerned with how each *translatio* in the history of Mediterranean culture is tied to textual—also material—transfers from one political and cultural context to another, and from one linguistic context to another. A translation here is always an interpretation, as shown by the connection of terms with the synonymic values *interpretari*, *vertere*, and *transferre*. In this domain, neologic invention takes up a central role and the same happens to neosemy, namely the meaning-shifts of a word, not only in relation to the translated text, but also in relation to the need to transcribe new experiences of thought.

In some famous pages, Cicero stresses that each passage from one culture to another has taken place by means of translations and reelaborations. He is thinking in particular of the passage from Greek culture, under whose influence Latin culture was shaping itself.<sup>9</sup> Cicero returns a number of times to the general meaning of translating, in the precise awareness that it is about preserving a grand cultural experience, obviously much superior to Latin culture as regards philosophical studies.<sup>10</sup> Hence the need to draw models and language from the Greeks, which he does with a very innovative endeavor, as a protagonist.<sup>11</sup> The commitment of writing

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scientia formati sunt, Veneris esse voluerunt, ut laeti ac salutaris numinis maiestate pro-  
 vecti errantes actus providentiae magisterio gubernarent. Ultimum vero tempus Mercurio  
 dandum esse putaverunt, cui se novissimo Luna coniungit. Quid hac potest inveniri dispo-  
 sitione subtilius? Purgatis agrestibus studiis, repertis artibus disciplinisque compositis per  
 diversos actus humani se generis exacuit intentio.” See also *De VI rerum principiis*, éd.  
 Th. Silverstein, in “Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age” 30 (1955), 290–  
 91. See Tullio Gregory, *Astrologia e teologia nella cultura medievale*, in *Mundana sapientia: Forme di conoscenza nella cultura medievale* (Roma: Storia e letteratura, 1992), 291–328; Tullio Gregory, *I cieli, il tempo, la storia*, in *Speculum naturale: Percorsi del pensiero medievale* (Roma: Storia e letteratura, 2007), 69–91.

<sup>9</sup> Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, I, 3 (Torino: UTET, 1976), 78.

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, I, 1 (Torino: UTET, 1976), 456: “Doctrina Graecia nos et omni litterarum genere superabat; in quo erat facile vincere non repugnantes.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., I, 3, 460; see also 460–62: “Philosophia usque ad hanc aetatem nec ullum habuit lumen litterarum Latinarum; quae inlustranda et excitanda nobis est. . . Qua re si aliquid oratoriae laudis nostra attulimus industria, multo studiosius philosophiae fontis aperimus, e quibus etiam illa manabant”; see *De finibus*, I, 4, 80–82: “Ego vero, quoniam forensibus operis, laboribus, periculis non deseruisse mihi videor praesidium, in quo a populo

philosophical works *latinis litteris* becomes much more urgent when the crisis of Greek civilization appears to be irreversible. This is the grand challenge facing his fellow citizens.<sup>12</sup> This is the example those Roman intellectuals gave, which “in iis studiis quae sero admodum expetita in hanc civitatem e Graecia transtulerunt.”<sup>13</sup>

Cicero raises several problems relating to translation in its widest meaning: from rendering Greek texts into Latin to reelaborating in new works themes and issues relating to Greek thought, in order to make that thought intelligible and pleasing to Latin ears.<sup>14</sup> Cicero calls for both the accurate use of Latin words born through transliteration of the Greek and already in use, and for the creation of new words to deal with new subjects, with the aim of preserving the specificity of the languages of the arts, the sciences, and the crafts.<sup>15</sup>

The texts I have quoted are broadly echoed in the *Ciceronianus* of Erasmus, who had to cope with similar problems. In Cicero we see the clear awareness that, although the *inopia* of the Latin languages (the *egestas patrii sermonis* lamented by Lucretius) has made it necessary to enrich the lexicon through transliterations and neologisms, leading Greek culture back *ad usum nostrum* has been entirely possible, thanks also to the Latins’ mastery of the art of rhetoric.<sup>16</sup>

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Romano locatus sum, debeo profecto quantumcumque possum, in eo quoque elaborare ut sint opera, studio, labore meo doctiores cives mei, nec cum istis tantopere pugnare, qui Graeca legere malint (modo legant illa ipsa, ne simulent) et iis servire, qui vel utrisque litteris uti velint vel, si suas habent, illas non magnopere desiderent.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., II, 1, 568: “hortor omnes qui facere id possunt ut huius quoque generis laudem [i.e. the primacy of the Greeks in philosophy] iam languenti Graeciae eripiant et transferant in hanc urbem . . . sicut reliquas omnis, quae quidam erant expetendae, studio atque industria sua maiores nostri transtulerunt.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., IV, 1, 704.

<sup>14</sup> Cicero, *De finibus*, I, 3, 78; see also 80: “Res vero bonas verbis electis graviter ornatè dictas quis non legat?”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., III, 1–2, 232. See also *Tusculanae disputationes*, II, 15, 592: “. . . Graeci illi, quorum copiosior est lingua quam nostra”; *De finibus*, III, 15, 272: “in hac inopi lingua non conceditur”; *De finibus*, I, 3, 80: “Linguae latinam non modo non inopem, ut vulgo putarent, sed locupletiore etiam esse quam graecam”; see also Antonio Traglia, *De lucretiano sermone ad philosophiam pertinente* (Roma: Gismondi, 1947).

<sup>16</sup> Cicero, *De oratore*, 3, 95 (Paris: Cornbaud, 1956), III, 37: “non haec ita statuo atque decerno ut desperem Latine ea . . . tradi ac perpoliri posse, patitur enim et lingua nostra et natura rerum veterem illam . . . prudentiam Graecorum ad nostrum usum moremque transferri.”

*Tradi, perpoliri, transferre* are all terms that express Cicero's commitment to writing philosophical texts that are foundation stones for a *translatio studiorum* from Greece to Rome, which is bound to last for centuries to come.

Great attention is given to the modes of *transferre*, of the *translatio*, which lie at the root of neologic creativity. Under certain conditions, writes Quintilian, "necesse sit transferre aut circumire."<sup>17</sup>

One could inscribe in the hendiadys *transferre aut circumire* the whole history of all problems related to translating. Those problems are not, however, the object of this paper, which considers instead only the connection of translating to each *translatio studiorum*, to each passage of civilization and culture from one geographic, political, and linguistic context to another, in order to prevent inheritances from going astray. Boethius is well aware of this—and with him Cassiodorus—in the time-span that sees the rise and the fall in the Latin West of that last renaissance of Hellenism, which marks the sunset of the ancient world.

The crisis of Greek hegemony and civilization prompts Boethius to insist on the urgency of ensuring a complex *translatio* of political power and cultural heritage. Just as "prisca hominis virtus urbium caeterarum ad hanc unam republicam dominationem, ingeniumque transtulerit," a precise commitment is also necessary for empowering citizens with instruction (*instruere*) in the fruits of *sapientia graeca*, in accordance with that typical trait of Latin civilization: the ability, "magis hac magis imitatione honestare," to imitate what is most *pulchrum* and *laudabile* in other nations.<sup>18</sup> One should note the strong connection between *transferre*, *instruere*, and *honestare*, translating, educating, and ennobling, as successive moments of a unique process of *translatio*. Boethius's endeavor is quite momentous, as it mirrors the awareness that the crisis of the Greek-Byzantine world requires taking charge of its inheritance. It is not by chance that the passionate words of Cicero's *Tusculanae* (and the

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<sup>17</sup> Quintilianus, *De institutione oratoria*, XII, 10, 34 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980), 123. See Quintilianus, *De institutione oratoria*, I, 5, 58 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1975), 101: "Sed haec divisio mea ad Graecum sermonem praecipue pertinet; nam et maxima ex parte Romanus inde conversus est, et confessis quoque Graecis utimur verbis, ubi nostra desunt, sicut illi a nobis nonnunquam mutantur"; See Quintilianus, *De institutione oratoria*, II, 14, 4 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976), 74: "Ne pugnemus igitur, cum praesertim plurimis alioqui Graecis sit utendum; nam certe et philosophos et musicos et geometras dicam, nec vim adferam nominibus his indecora in Latinum sermonem mutatione"; see Carlo Dionisotti, *Philosophie grèque et tradition latine*, in *Aux origines du lexique philosophique européen: L'influence de la Latinitas* (Louvain-la-Neuve: FIDEM, 1997), 41–57.

<sup>18</sup> Boethius, *In Categorias Aristotelis*, II, P.L. 64, 201.

syntagm *languenti Graecae*) recur in Boethius, placing his translator-work on the same path as Cicero's commitment.<sup>19</sup> Once again, the insistence on the verb *transferre* is relevant: *translatio* is the privileged vehicle for ensuring the passage of culture from Greece to Rome: "nos . . . transferre diu multumque laborantes."<sup>20</sup> Hence Boethius's project to translate all the works by Plato and Aristotle with their commentators ("in Romanum stilem vertens . . . id omne ordinatum transferam . . . in latinam redigam formam.")<sup>21</sup>

The program remained largely unfinished: although Boethius's achievement was large, much of the translation has been lost.<sup>22</sup>

Cassiodorus was well aware of the need to translate patristic and profane texts from the Greek, to which end he founded Vivarium, after the failure of the project to set up a great school in Rome under the auspices of Pope Agapitus, as an imitation of the celebrated Christian school of Alexandria and of the more recent school at Nisibis. Intellectual work at Vivarium—especially the copyists and miniaturists' task of providing *codici emendati* for the *lectio divina*—was the precondition, Cassiodorus writes, for Jacob's ladder, the way to ascend to celestial bliss, by means of reading and rereading.<sup>23</sup>

Cassiodorus points to the urgent need of new translations, for he is aware of the imminent end of the ancients' civilization, the *prisci*, the *veteres*, which must be rescued for future epochs.<sup>24</sup>

Cassiodorus assigned his monks the task not only of transcribing the works of the ancients (*diligenti cura transcribere*), but also of translating whatever is left in Greek on the shelves of Vivarium.<sup>25</sup> Very clear, then, is the awareness of the vital importance not only of assembling at Vivarium a great library of sacred and profane texts, but also of transcribing and

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., *In Topica Ciceronis commentaria*, V, P.L. 65, 1152 b.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., *In librum Interpretationis ed. secunda*, I, P.L., 65, 429.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., II, col. 433.

<sup>22</sup> Cassiodorus, *Variae*, MGH, *Auctorum Antiquissimorum* t. XII, 40: "Translationibus enim tuis—we read in a letter of King Theodore to Boethius—Pythagoras musicus, Ptolomaeus astronomus leguntur Itali: Nicomachus arithmeticus, geometricus Euclides audiuntur Ausonii: Plato theologus, Aristoteles logicus Quirinali voce disceptant: mechanicum etiam Archimedes Latialem Siculis reddidisti: et quascumque disciplinas vel artes facunda Graecia per singulos viros edidit, te uno auctore patrio sermone Roma suscepit." See Andrea Giardina, *Cassiodoro politico* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., *Institutiones*, I, *praef.* 2, 4; *praef.* 7, 6: "legite precor assidue, recurrite diligenter."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 4, 5: "per magistros agatur antiquos quod impleri non potuit per novellos."

<sup>25</sup> Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, I, 14–15, 32: "de istis subinde transferatur."



translating in a moment of severe crisis, which also struck Latin culture in the aftermath of the conquest of Rome by Belisarius, then by Totila and again by Belisarius. Hence the necessity of finding a space in which to preserve a cultural tradition, first and foremost by transcribing and translating. Cassiodorus ascribes exceptional value to the functions of the *antiquarius* and the *librarius*, who operate on history by disseminating a message that continues to be effective beyond their own persons, “absens de opere suo”: the *librarii*—writes Cassiodorus with an audacious etymology—“librae Domini iustitiaeque deservunt.”<sup>26</sup>

I wish to stress the centrality of transcribing and translating to the *translatio studiorum*, which is otherwise subject to the risk of becoming a mere historiographical *tópos*. As it was perceived in the context of the Carolingian Renaissance, especially in relation to the *translatio imperii*, due to the coronation of Charlemagne and his policy of cultural renewal, based on the foundation of new schools according to the suggestions of Alcuin. With Charlemagne and Alcuin, was born the myth of Paris as the new Athens, which became commonplace in the thirteenth century to boost the role played by the Parisian schools for the whole of Christianity.

The historiographical *tópos* is certainly relevant and much studied.<sup>27</sup> In this paper I wish to point out a particular—but essential—aspect of this *translatio*, which goes far beyond the ninth century, namely its being tied once again to the setting up of a new library of authors, to the “return” of forgotten texts, or to their first translation into Latin. It is sufficient here to remember Alcuin asking Charlemagne to send some young collaborators to York and have them bring back to Saint Martin in Tours a set of texts still extant in the library of the cathedral school: “ut aliquos ex pueris nostris remittam, qui excipiant inde nobis necessaria quaeque et revehant in Frantiam flores Britanniae.”<sup>28</sup>

Once again the return (*revehnant*) of the books is linked to a renaissance, a reflowering of studies on the Loire where the Auster blows. In addition to the increase in manuscripts of ancient texts during the ninth century, translation of key Greek Patristic texts also occurred on a substantial scale, first and foremost the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius. After Hilduin,

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., I, 30, 1, 75–76; “contra diaboli interpretationes illicitas calamo atramentoque pugnare,” *ivi*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> A large and rich bibliography is available in Ulrike Krämer, *Translatio imperii et studii: Zum Geschichts- und Kulturverständnis in der französischen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Bonn: Romanistischer Verlag, 1996); see also Vincenzo Cilento, “Il mito medievale della *Translatio studii*,” *Filologia e letteratura* 12 (1966), 1–15.

<sup>28</sup> MGH, *Epistulae IV, Epistularum t. IV Karolini Aevi*, t. II, 176–78.



it was John Scotus Eriugena, to whom King Charles the Bald assigned the task of translating his works, well aware of the difficulty of a text, which is “anfractuosum, longeque a modernis sensibus remotum.”<sup>29</sup> Scotus stressed the importance of going back to the ancient Greek sources of Christian thought “ad purissimos copiosissimosque Graium lattices . . . ex praeclarissimis Graecorum fontibus,”<sup>30</sup> of which he had become *interpres* and translator.<sup>31</sup> As is well known, we owe to the translations of Eriugena and to the terminology he created a number of linguistic innovations that would feature prominently in the theological language of the centuries to come—think of *theosis* and *supernaturalis* with all analogous compounds with *super*, to name just a few.<sup>32</sup>

It was at the climax of another epochal moment of medieval Latin civilization, during the twelfth century (culminating in the thirteenth), that one of the most significant *translationes* of European culture took place. It had been in many ways prepared by the *translatio* from Byzantine to Arabic culture during the Abbasid caliphate of Bagdad, which was itself based on the grand work of the translators from Greek into Syriac. Within less than a century, Europe discovered the treasures of Greek philosophy and science in the first, unruly Latin translations. Everywhere, from Ireland to Sicily, from Spain to Gaul, translations from Arabic and Greek multiplied in order to feed a *philosophandi aviditas* born out of the *pau-pertas* and *egestas* of the early medieval tradition. “Ex Graecorum fontibus omnes Latinorum disciplinae profluxerunt,”<sup>33</sup> and the fruits of lost

<sup>29</sup> Iohannes Scotus Eriugena, *Versio operum S. Dionysii Areopagitae praefatio*, L., 122, 1032.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., col. 1031; Maximi Confessoris *Ambigua ad Iohannem iuxta Iohannis Scotti Eriugena latinam interpretationem*, Turnhout-Leuven 1988, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., col. 1032; “Haec igitur nostra qualiscunque sit translatio non quidem prolixae indiget, ut arbitror, apologiae, cum omnibus eius aemulis, quicunque et qualiscunque sit, facillima una responsione possimus occurrere, vestrae videlicet celsitudini neque potuisse neque debuisse non obedire. Si quis autem nimis tardae aut nimis inusitatae redarguerit elocutionis, attendat, non me tantum, sed et se ipsum nihil posse plus accipere, quam quod ipse distribuit, qui dividit singulis propria, prout vult. Sin vero obscuram minusque apertam praedictae interpretationis seriem iudicaverit, videat, me interpretem huius operis esse, non expositorem. Ubi valde pertimesco, ne forte culpam infidi interpretis incurram. At si aut superflua quaedam superadiecta esse, aut de integritate graecae constructionis quaedam deesse arbitratus fuerit, recurat ad codicem graecum, unde ego interpretatus sum; ibi fortassis inveniet, itane est necne.”

<sup>32</sup> See Iohannis Scotti Eriugena *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), in particular *index verborum graecorum*.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science* (New York: Ungar, 1960), 102, 210; see also Tullio Gregory, *Origini della terminologia filosofica moderna. Linee di ricerca* (Firenze: Olschki, 2006).

wisdom had to be sought even further back. The new masters of Greek culture were first and foremost the Arabs: “nos primi Latinorum fuimus ad quos post Arabum translationem hec scientia pervenerat,” writes the author of the *Tabulae* of Marseille, referring to an astronomical tradition that the Arabs had inherited from the Indians and the Chaldeans.<sup>34</sup> The urgency of *transfere*, of *translatare*, was thus overwhelmingly to reawaken (*a somno excitari*)<sup>35</sup> texts and authors of theology and philosophy, astrology and medicine (taking in the broad spectrum of the magical and divinatory arts).<sup>36</sup> Princes and prelates competed to acquire new texts capable of opening up unknown intellectual horizons, establishing a new *Weltanschauung* for humanity, and providing new modes of philosophical reflection and radical changes in the interpretation of the Scriptures and the *sacra doctrina*. Translators were the protagonists of this Renaissance, from James of Venice to William of Moerbeke, Gerard of Cremona to Michael Scot, to name only the most famous. The *translatio studiorum* had at that time one of its most felicitous and innovative moments. A new library of *auctores* emerged, which were completely extraneous to monastic culture, and—together with the library—a new philosophical, scientific and theological lexicon arise, born out of the creativity of the translators. This would become the library of the universities, with texts that would underpin higher education for many centuries, while the new lexicon of Scholasticism lay at the root of the philosophical and scientific lexicon of all modern European languages.

It was clearly and universally recognized that *transfere in latinum sermonem*, the *translatare de arabico in latinum sermonem, de greco in latinum*, was the only way to draw on previously unknown sources of wisdom, thus rediscovering mythical and historical traditions. In the dedication to Frederick II of his translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *De natura hominis*, Burgundio of Pisa underlined with vigor the value of the scientific texts he was about to translate (“altiora vobis transferre curabo”): the name of the emperor would shine with eternal glory and the state would benefit enormously. The emperor was well aware of this and of the importance of the translations made at his court. The works of the ancient philosophical and scientific culture, “sub graecis antiquitus edite,” remained unknown to Latin readers. It was up to the *magistri* to find the best fruits within

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 75: “quodque a meipso haberi scientie negat viduitas ab aliis mutuari priscurum multiplex suadet auctoritas.”

the translations, so that the work of the ancient philosophers could be brought back to life in the university halls (“in auditorio vestro”).<sup>37</sup>

It is no wonder then that the issue of rebirth is historically associated with the *translatio* of texts that had gone astray during the early Middle Ages. It was no different with the experience of humanist culture in the aftermath of the new stream of works coming from the Byzantine world, which had preserved many treasures of Greek wisdom alongside the contemporary rediscovery of Latin authors who had long been forgotten in monastic libraries. The bibliophile Richard of Bury was well aware of the hidden treasures in those libraries, many of which he was able to visit by taking advantage of the diplomatic missions entrusted to him at the court of Richard III.<sup>38</sup>

Having been freed from the oblivion and barbarity in which they had fallen (*oblivioni traditi; digesta barbarie*), books came back to life. *Translatio* was pivotal to Richard of Bury too for the process “de successiva perfectione librorum.”<sup>39</sup> Not only as regards the mythical perspective of the relationship between Greeks and Persians and between Aristotle and the East, but also in the precise awareness of the dependency of Latin pagan and Christian culture on Greek culture.

The rediscovery of Greek, Latin, Arabic and Hebrew texts found its place within a reinvented continuity comprising translations, transcriptions, and interpretations, in the passage from one culture to the other. The Renaissance provided this series of passages with a mythical—as it was with Hellenism—framework, in a historical perspective going back once again to the mythical East, to Zoroaster and especially to the fabulous Hermes and lost Egyptian wisdom. When introducing the first translation of the *Pimander*, Marsilio Ficino placed at the origin of the *prisca theologia* a first *translatio* of the work of Hermes Trismegistus from hieroglyphic script to the Greek language: “Edidit vero librum aegyptiis litteris: idemque graecae linguae peritus, graecis inde transferendo communicavit

<sup>37</sup> *Historia diplomatica Friderici secundi*, t. IV, 1, Paris 1854, 384–85: “et ipsos [libros] antiquis philosophorum operibus, qui vocis vestre ministeriis reviviscunt . . . ad communem utilitate studentium . . . publicatis.”

<sup>38</sup> Richard de Bury (Richard Aungerville), *Philobiblion* (Napoli: Altamura, 1954), 99–100, 103: “Tunc nobilissimorum monasteriorum aperiebantur armaria, reserebantur scrinia et cistule solvebantur, et per longa secula in sepulcris soporata volumina expergiscuntur attonita, queque in locis tenebrosis latuerant nove lucis radiis perfunduntur.”

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 98: “Inter huiusmodi pleraque comperimus renovari dignissima . . . quae nos . . . in future resurrectionis exemplum resuscitata quodam modo redvive reddidimus sospitati.”

aegyptiorum mysteria.” Thus started the tradition (the *prisca theologia*) from the divine Hermes to, without interruption, the divine Plato: “exordia sumens a Mercurio, a divino Platone penitus absoluta.” It was once again a translation that made it possible to teach the Latins the first origins of the *prisca theologia* by means of that *Pimander*, which until then had remained *apud graecos*, “nuper ex Macedonia in Italiam advectus.” The linguistic translation from the Greek to the Latin by Ficino himself corresponded with the material transportation of a text from Greece to Italy: “ego autem cum tuis [of Cosimo dei Medici] exhortationibus provocatus, a graeca lingua in latina transtulissem.”<sup>40</sup>

A few years later, dedicating to Lorenzo dei Medici the first complete Latin translation of Plato, Ficino did not forget to link the destiny of the rediscovered Platonic philosophy with his own accomplishment as translator.<sup>41</sup> His translation of Plato is followed by that of Plotinus. Both are fundamental chapters in the *pia philosophia* and *prisca theologia* that were translated under the protection of divine Providence.<sup>42</sup>

The impact the rediscovery of Greek and Latin codices had on the flourishing of humanist culture between the fifteenth and sixteenth century is well known, and it has been amply noted that the consciousness of a renaissance was tied to a new reading of ancient texts. Let me once again point out, though, that this rediscovery, this renaissance, was strictly bound first and foremost to a new *translatio* of texts from the Byzantine world and from the monasteries of Northern Europe to the centers of Italian culture: Rome and Florence, Bologna and Ferrara, Naples and Palermo. The *cupiditas habendi codices* brought about a new *inventio* and *translatio*, which we recognize in the letters of fifteenth-century humanists, who describe their peregrinations in the manner of Ulysses (“per diversas mundi partes

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<sup>40</sup> “[Mercurius] Primus igitur theologiae appellatus est auctor, eum sequutus Orpheus: secundas antiquae theologiae partes obtinuit. Orphei sacris iniciatus est Aglaophemus. Aglaophemo successit in theologia Picthagoras: quem Philolaus sectatus est Divi Platonis nostri praeceptor. Itaque una priscae theologiae undique sibi consona secta ex theologis sex, miro quodam ordine conflata est. Exordia sumens a Mercurio; a Divo Platone penitus absoluta.” *Argumentum* of Marsilio Ficino in *Mercurii Trismegisti liber de potestate et sapientia Dei*, Geraert van der Leye, 1471 (a copy is retained in the Biblioteca Municipale “A. Panizzi,” Reggio Emilia: inc. E 26).

<sup>41</sup> *Proemium* of Marsilio Ficino in *Platonis Opera*, ed. Venetiis 1517; Ficino, *Proemium* to Plotinus’ translation, Basileae 1580: “verum interim admonendi estis . . . favere libenter auctori pio, favere etiam traductori non solum translatione verborum sed explicatione sententiarum communi omnium utilitati pro viribus consulenti.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*: “divina igitur providentia ducti divinum Platonem et magnum Plotinum interpretati sumus”.

ad libros perquirendos tam graecos quam latinos").<sup>43</sup> Not only from the Byzantine world, in relation to which Giovanni Aurispa was the greatest mediator of the *translatio* of books and cultures, but from Northern Europe too, a *translationes* arose that freed the books from Gothic *tenebrae*. As Antonio Correr wrote to Cecilia Gonzaga: "de Germanorum ergastulis in Italiam deportavi," referring to the manuscripts he had discovered while staying in Basel for the Council. Ermolao Barbaro wrote similarly to Poggio Bracciolini: "haec litterarum semina, quae vestra ope et opera a Germania in Italiam deferetis." Francesco Negri, who discovered the complete text of the *Mathesis* by Firmicus Maternus, wrote: "detrusus in carcerem Gottica feritate Firmicus latitabat."<sup>44</sup> "Ita nos quidem Graecos a tenebris permultos eruimus" Angelo Poliziano recalled; while staying in Germany, Poggio *restituit nobis* lost Latin texts, and the young Nicholas of Cusa (then the secretary of Cardinal Giovanni Orsini) found Cicero's *De republica*.<sup>45</sup>

*Translatio* came about by means of location, acquisition and even theft of codices, and of their transportation to Italy. They were rescued from libraries, in which they lay forgotten and imprisoned, and were "transferred" into a context brimming with interest in ancient authors. Hence the urgency of transcribing, translating, and eventually publishing. The praise of Pope Martin V for Ambrogio Traversari, the celebrated translator of Diogenes Laertius, is a good example.<sup>46</sup>

As the Turkish threat to Constantinople grew increasingly serious, the search for codices became progressively more frantic in order to rescue—and thus *transferre*—a Greek patrimony on the way to extinction. In the aftermath of the fall, Western culture was anguished by the thought that the Greek, pagan and Christian tradition it had been rediscovering might now have been lost. On July 21, 1453, Enea Silvio Piccolomini wrote to Nicholas of Cusa: "O insignis Graecia, ecce tuum finem." When it came, the fall of Constantinople marked a definite break in an entire tradition

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<sup>43</sup> See Remigio Sabbadini, *La scoperta dei codici latini e greci nei secoli XIV e XV* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1996), 217; for the *cupiditas habendi codices*, see also *Carteggio di Giovanni Aurispa*, ed. by Remigio Sabbadini (Roma: Senato, 1931), 91; 84: "Accedit ad gratiam nova illa veterum librorum inventio ac sepulorum diu virorum in lucem revocatio."

<sup>44</sup> Sabbadini, 119 n. 20; 79 n. 33; 145 n. 27.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 56 n. 83; 110 n. 20: "inventus . . . Coloniae urbis Germaniae, in bibliotheca pulverulenta, ubi pervetusti codices octingenti carceri mancipati videntur."

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 57 n. 89: "neque enim uberiores fructus afferre potest hominibus industria tua quam grecos excellentissimos doctores, quorum scientia nobis est ignota, latinos faciendo ex grecis, ut eorum doctrinam, per quam ad celestia hortamur regna, nobis fiat nota."

of texts and their translation: "Nunc Graecorum philosophorum ultimus patebit interitus."<sup>47</sup> Cardinal Bessarion dedicated his energy on behalf of all humanists to rescuing the texts, and with them an entire culture.<sup>48</sup>

The rediscovery of the ancient authors raised the problem not only of their transcription and publication, but also of their translation. Discussions about translating grew more and more frequent between the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. Translation into Latin or any of the *linguae vulgares* became more than a marginal aspect of the *translatio studiorum*. At issue was not only the correct manner of translating, but also the role played by translations as vehicles for the transmission of cultures. While Leonardo Bruni condemned as barbaric from the viewpoint of literary purism and the so-called "classical" canon most medieval renderings of Aristotle—such as the *Ethica* translated by Grosseteste, which is full of half-Greek and half-barbaric unintelligible words—Alfonso García de Cartagena pointed out the importance of translation in order to rediscover an ancient tradition that had been interrupted as early as the first centuries of the Christian era ("omni paene Graecorum commercio caremus et Attici fontes penitus aruerunt").<sup>49</sup> García also supported all the linguistic technicalities of the sciences and the arts—citing renowned texts of Cicero—and especially the exceptional value of a *latinitas* that was continuously developing: a living language rather than a dead one, which would be capable of assimilating additions from the most diverse and remote cultures. In its *infinita potentia*, Latin became the grand vehicle of a continuous *translatio*.

<sup>47</sup> See Agostino Pertusi, *La caduta di Costantinopoli* (Milano: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1976), II, 50ff. See, Antonio Carile, *La caduta di Costantinopoli nella cultura europea*, in *L'Europa dopo la caduta di Costantinopoli: 29 maggio 1453* (Spoleto: Cisam, 2008), 1–53; Gherardo Ortalli, *La Chiesa di Roma, Costantinopoli e l'idea di Europa al tempo del Piccolomini*, in *L'Europa dopo la caduta di Costantinopoli: 29 maggio 1453* (Spoleto: Cisam, 2008), 435–66.

<sup>48</sup> See Sabbadini, 67 n. 146: "ardentiori tamen studio post Graeciae excidium et deflaendam Byzantii captivitatem in perquirendis graecis libris omnes meas vires, omnem curam, omnem operam, facultatem industriamque consumpsi; verebar enim et vehementissime formidabam ne cum caeteris rebus tot excellentissimi libri . . . brevi tempore periclitarentur atque perirent."

<sup>49</sup> See Aleksander Birkenmajer, *Der Streit des Alonso von Cartagena mit Leonardo Bruni Aretino*, in *Études d'histoire des sciences et de la philosophie* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Nakau, 1970), 405–86: 439: "A primitiva enim Ecclesia et a temporibus antiquorum conciliorum omni paene Graecorum commercio caremus et Attici fontes penitus aruerunt. Merito ergo quidquid ex illa antiqua sapientiae apotheca de novo hauritur, prae nimia antiquitate novitatem non modicam, ut ita dixerim, importare videtur."

Different cultural horizons and new experiences of life and thought were mirrored in the lexicon of a language that became progressively richer. At that time Latin was the undisputed linguistic vehicle of culture. Before long, however, the role to be played by the vernacular languages became an issue.<sup>50</sup> Erasmus, for instance, was clearly aware—once again with reference to Cicero (“nova rebus novis nomina”)—of the historicity of the Latins.

The fact that *translatio* was primarily achieved thanks to the Latin language was an issue that gained in importance in European consciousness between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. New worlds and new stars required changes in mental schemes and languages, and correspondingly profound transformations in both the Latin and vernacular lexica. It was not only a question of coining new words within the history of modern Latin (*anthropologia* and *psychologia*, for instance, *ontologia* and *aesthetica*, *dualismus* and *monismus*, *telescopium* and *microscopium*): another fundamental *translatio* occurs when old terms are imbued with new meanings (neosemy) and stripped of their traditional meanings.

From this point of view one might say that modern philosophy constructed its own language—both Latin and vernacular—by means of its constant commitment to rejuvenating its own lexicon. It did not consist solely of the progressive invention of neologisms, it was first and foremost a *translatio* of meanings, a usage of lexemes that had long been defined by the authority of the scholastic tradition and that were now stripped of their ancient meanings in order to be assigned new ones. Descartes wrote that he was about to introduce a *novus usus* of the term *intuitus*, “a vulgari significatione remove”; “singula verba . . . transferam ad meum sensum.”<sup>51</sup> Francis Bacon, who counted among the *idola fori* the errors deriving from inappropriate language usage, likewise claimed the right to translate traditional terms *ad sensum nostrum*.<sup>52</sup> Even Immanuel Kant—whose library included the great classics of modern thought in Latin

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<sup>50</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Ciceronianus sive de optimo dicendi genere*, in *Opera omnia*, recognovit I. Clericus (Lugduni Batavorum: Clericus, 1703), t. I, col. 992: “. . . Porro quum undequaque tota rerum humanarum scena inversa sit, quis hodie potest apte dicere, nisi multum Ciceroni dissimilis? . . . Quocumque me verto, video mutata omnia, in alio sto proscenio, aliud conspicio theatrum, imo mundum alium.”

<sup>51</sup> René Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1966), 8–9; see the French translation “annotation conceptuelle” of Jean-Luc Marion, “notes mathématiques” of Pierre Costabel (La Haye: Nijhoff 1977), 126–27.

<sup>52</sup> Francis Bacon, *Novum organum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), 235: “translatis vocabulis receptis . . . ad sensum nostrum.” See also Marta Fattori, *Linguaggio e filosofia nel Seicento europeo* (Firenze: Olschki, 2000).



translation—habitually clarified the new meanings he was conferring on terms of Latin and Scholastic origin, which came from a long tradition and which happened to be much better known and common than the then still imperfect German philosophical language.

We could go on like this: I mention these examples to remind ourselves of all the modes and forms of *translatio* that have accompanied the history of culture. I will now look at specific and technical lexica and will try to cover the period right up to our own, in which the issue of *translatio* is no longer considered with respect to Latin, but to the language of authors who have acquired visibility beyond the boundaries of their own country and language, thanks to the originality of their thought and expression. Just think how much neo-Latin languages owe as regards neology and neosemy to the works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and later of Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger. Once again, this is a *translatio*, which takes place in analysis, translations, and interpretations.

Another epochal passage—a new *translatio*—occurred at the threshold of modernity: the progressive affirmation in philosophical and scientific writing of vernacular languages, the defense of their autonomy and dignity. Once again the route is opened up by means of translations. Sperone Speroni placed in the mouth of Pietro Pomponazzi a trenchant appeal to read the ancient philosophers in vernacular translation: an appeal that become paradigmatic and was echoed in France in the pages of Joachim du Bellay. Pomponazzi's argument was firm: poor usage of humanist heritage had reduced philosophy to mere imitation, while promoting a cult of words, as if they were holy relics. The humanists had failed to perceive that the ancient "superb edifice" was already in decay.<sup>53</sup>

A renaissance in philosophy required the abandoning of the schools and narrow circles of bloodless humanist classicism, while at the same time finding a new public and a new language. A new *translatio* was needed from Greek and Latin to the vernacular languages and even the dialects. Pomponazzi's speech, as reported by Speroni, even assumed prophetic and messianic overtones.<sup>54</sup> A translator or merchant of this kind would be blamed and insulted at first, but later "thousands and thousands

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<sup>53</sup> Sperone Speroni, *Dialogo delle lingue* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007), 36–37, 44: "una parte divenne polvere, e un'altra dee esser rotta in più pezzi."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 37: "tempo forse, pochi anni appresso, verrà che alcuna buona persona non meno ardita e ingenua porrà mano a così fatta mercatantia; e per giovare alla gente, non curando dell'odio né della invidia de' litterati, condurrà da altrui lingua alla nostra le gioie e i frutti delle scienze: le quali ora perfettamente non gustiamo né conosciamo."



of others will praise and bless his study." Pomponazzi boldly compared him to a new Messiah—to Christ himself, who was first "blamed and crucified," and later revered and adored. The temerity of the simile did not escape Costantino Lascaris, a learned representative of the most conservative classical humanism.<sup>55</sup>

The message is plain: translation had found its place within a new ideal history of salvation supported by *translationes* that made it possible for even the most ancient texts to come back to life and to fertilize new philosophies. Provided, obviously, that they had been freed from the cult of words that had rendered ancient culture the patrimony of a handful of scholars who did not adhere to any style of thought but instead followed only words, which "is not food but a dream and shadow of the real food of the intellect." It was as if, Giovan Battista Gelli wrote, "the spirit of Aristotle and Plato . . . was locked up in the Greek alphabeth as in a vial, and that man learns it if he drank in one breath, as he does for a syrup."<sup>56</sup>

Rescuing philosophers by translating their work into the vernacular would also open up new horizons. Philosophy would leave the schools and descend among the people, so that the farmer as well as the gentleman could philosophize. Peretto (Pomponazzi) concluded hoping for an age in which without the help of the languages the people could study and to become perfect in every science.<sup>57</sup> The honor of the vernacular restored, the new *translatio* would bring about a radical change of public. Following on from Sperone Speroni, whom he often literally translated, Joachim du Bellay developed with great clarity in his *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse*, a motif we already noted in Pomponazzi's speech: the demysticizing power of translation, which strips ancient texts of the oracular aura bestowed by the use of "dead" languages. Theologians, especially—"venerables Druydes"—with their "supersticieuses raisons," showed that they feared translations, which reveal the "mystères," of which they claim to be the sole owners. The polemic on translating becomes more and more antischolastic and antitheological.<sup>58</sup> A century

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 37: "tanto diceste di questo vostro buon uomo che di piccolo mercatante l'avete fatto messia . . . il redentore di questa lingua volgare."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 38, 41; See also Giovan Battista Gelli, *I capricci del bottaio*, ragionamento IV, in *Opere* (Torino: UTET, 1976), 179–80; 182: "la nostra lingua è attissima a esprimere qual si voglia concetto di filosofia o astrologia o di qualunque altra scienza, e così bene come si sia la latina, e forse anche la greca."

<sup>57</sup> Speroni, *Dialogo delle lingue*, 45, 44.

<sup>58</sup> Joachim du Bellay, *La deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* (Paris: Nelson, 1970), 31, 67–68.

later, Leibniz took up the same issues when he republished Mario Nizolio: to free ourselves from Scholastic culture, we need to abandon Latin and start cultivating our national language, which is alive and popular (German appears more *aptiorem* to philosophical writing than any other language: “quia Germania in realibus plenissima est et perfectissima”). The goal was to render philosophy accessible “plebi quodammodo atque etiam foeminis.”<sup>59</sup>

The revolutionary import of vernacular translations—another great *translatio studiorum*—was felt most effectively and emblematically in translations of Scripture. The rival trajectories of religious renewal between the fifteenth and the sixteenth century found their precise point of intersection in the agreed need for direct access by believers to the text of the Bible, beyond the mediation of both the Latin language and Scholastic exegesis. While the translator of the first Italian version of the Bible, published by Niccolò Malerbi, in 1471, was already dedicating it to all human beings without any distinction between male and female or by age,<sup>60</sup> it was Erasmus—the most lucid expression of Europe’s unruly consciousness—who gave the most clear-cut reason, when he defined the reading of the Bible in any of the vernacular languages as the privileged route for *philosophia Christiana*, setting aside all useless theological disputes, such as those concerning the Resurrection of Christ, the Eucharist, and the Trinity, which is where all *dissidia, contentiones, odia, haereses* were born. Let us return to Scripture, he wrote, under the guidance of one’s own consciousness.<sup>61</sup> He wrote these words in January 1522—a few months before the first edition of Luther’s German translation of the New Testament appeared in September and went on to enjoy immense success (twenty-one editions between 1522 and 1546 in Wittenberg alone). The discussion that followed concerning Luther’s approach to translation (especially as regards Paul’s verse on justification by faith) provoked a number of relevant responses, in terms of a new manner of

<sup>59</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Marii Nizolii de veris principiis . . . dissertatio praeliminaris*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, IV, 144.

<sup>60</sup> See Gigliola Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo: La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471–1605)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 40.

<sup>61</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum*, in *Opera*, cit. t. VIII, dedica *pio lectori*: “... Equidem cupiam in omnes verti linguas. Cupit Christus suam Philosophiam quam latissime propagari. Pro omnibus mortuus est: ab omnibus cognosci desiderat. . . . Nunc ut quod institui pergam, cur indecorum videtur, si quisquam sonet Evangelium ea lingua qua natus est, et quam intelligit: Gallus Gallica, Britannus Britannica, Germanus Germanica, Indus Indica?”

understanding the *translatio* as an instrument for disseminating a text by adapting it to the sensitivities and the language of the people.<sup>62</sup>

The success enjoyed by the many new translations of Scripture made it impossible for the Catholic Church to keep control, despite the belated condemnations issued at the Council of Trent of all non-authorized versions (the first decree on the prohibition of vernacular translations is found in the appendix to the first edition of the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of 1559), and earlier prohibitions by local Catholic authorities in Spain, Italy, England, and France. While it is true—as many have correctly suggested—that not all vernacular versions of the Bible were associated with the Reformation and some even predate it—which explains why the first reservations were not expressed at the Council of Trent until 1546<sup>63</sup>—it is equally the case that the theologians of Paris were very clear in their minds when, in their condemnation of 1544, they cited a clear line of continuity between several medieval heresies—which also called for the Bible to be disseminated more widely in vernacular translation—and the new versions that appeared in the age of Reformation.<sup>64</sup>

This “maliciousness of our times,” tied up with the “pernicious” and “dangerous” translation of the sacred texts, is a key trait of modernity. It is no wonder that religious and political institutions, which consider themselves invested by a superior authority to keep track of ideas and behaviors, have always tried to set, whenever they could, precise limitations on the press and the free circulation of books—the chosen means being proscriptions and book-burning. They set out to hinder precisely that *translatio librorum*, which I have shown to be an essential structure of the *translatio studiorum*. For this reason, it is worth recalling as an aside that the circulation of books in all its material aspects (from printing to

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<sup>62</sup> Martin Luther, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*. An Italian translation in *Scritti religiosi* (Torino: UTET, 1967), 708–09: “denn man muß nicht die Buchstaben in der lateinischen Sprache fragen, wie man soll deutsch reden, wie diese Esel thun, sondern man muß die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gassen, den gemeinen Mann auf dem Markt drümb fragen und denselbigen auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reddten, und darnach dolmetschen.”

<sup>63</sup> See Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo*, 40.

<sup>64</sup> See *Index de l'Université de Paris* (Sherbrooke: Centre d'Études de la Renaissance-Éditions de l'Université de Sherbrooke, 1985), 416: “Quamvis in quacumque linguam ver-tantur sacrae literae, quae suapte natura sanctae sunt et bonae, quanti tamen sit periculi permittere passim lectionem earum in linguam vulgarem traductarum idiotis et simplicibus nec eas pie et humiliter legentibus, quales nunc plurimi reperiuntur, satis indicarunt Vualdenses, pauperes de Lugduno, Albigenses, et Turelupini, qui inde occasione sumpta in multos errores lapsi plurimos in eosdem induxerunt. Quare huiusce tempestatis perspecta hominum malitia, periculosa ac perniciosa censetur eiusmodi traductio.”

official and underground retail) is also a non-marginal aspect of the *translatio studiorum*, which is endowed with its own agents and ways of communication. Testimony to this is provided by the many letters mirroring interests, friendships, and tensions within the *Respublica litterarum*, with all pressing requests and searches for, and exchanges of new, rare or prohibited books.

The ecclesiastical censors perfectly understood the revolutionary value of book circulation—the vehicle of every *translatio studiorum*—well beyond the diffusion of clandestine texts (which were still being entrusted to manuscripts as late as the age of the Enlightenment). They sought to control printers and booksellers, worried as they were about, first and foremost, the ever-widening circulation of texts originating in Reformed countries within their Catholic counterparts. Hence the ordinances to local Catholic authorities to exercise control over the borders of the cities and to seize all books coming “from suspicious places,” especially the Netherlands and Germany, above all from the Frankfurt book fair—books that were often hidden in “bundles within which they send out the paintings of Holland.”<sup>65</sup> Before long, however, not even this continuous control would be sufficient to check the circulation of books via ever more complex and elusive channels. The words addressed by Robert Cardinal Bellarmine to the Inquisitor of Modena in July 1614 thus sound like a surrender, or rather the triumph of the civilization of the book in all its power.<sup>66</sup>

The goal of hindering the free circulation of books and ideas would not, however, vanish with the advent of modernity:<sup>67</sup> the age of Enlightenment too gleamed with the fire of burning books, and in more recent centuries, totalitarian regimes have condemned and destroyed books. Other *translationes* have taken place. When, on May 10, 1933, Hitler ordered the burning of books by “degenerate” authors—Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann and Erich M. Remarque—on the squares in front of the

<sup>65</sup> See Antonio Rotondò, “Nuovi documenti per la storia dell’Indice dei libri proibiti (1572–1638),” *Rinascimento*, 3 (1963), 145–211: 186, 185, 190.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 197: “Padre mio, non si straccano gli heretici e gl’inemici, non so s’io devo dire più presto di questa santa sede o dell’anime proprie, di seminar continuamente le zizzanie dei loro errori et heresie nel campo della cristianità con tanti e tanti libri perniciosi che alla giornata mandano fuori di nuovo, è necessario che non si dormi, ma che ci affatichiamo di estirpargli almeno in quei luoghi dove potiamo.”

<sup>67</sup> See Fernando Báez, *Storia universale della distruzione dei libri dalle tavolette sumere alla guerra in Iraq* (Roma: Viella 2004); Lucien X. Polastron, *Libri al rogo: Storia della distruzione infinita delle biblioteche* (Bonnard: Milano 2006). See also the Bulla *Exurge Domine* against Luther: “ut eius memoria omnino deleatur de Christifidelium consortio . . . illa [i.e. scripta] comburant” in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, II 461.

Reich's universities, those malevolent bonfires triggered a new series of migrations of men and books, a new *translatio* on the path of freedom. Beyond the voluntary exiles, the daring transfer of the library of the Warburg Institute from Hamburg to London by two boats that landed on the shores of the Thames in December 1933 is paradigmatic: sixty thousand volumes, documents, and photographs from a great school that had profoundly altered and renewed research into iconology, art history, and the history of ideas. It was not merely a library, it was a cultural patrimony, a school of research that landed in London, thus setting off a new *translatio* in a climate of uncertainty and hope: "It was a strange adventure," Fritz Saxl, one of the protagonists wrote, "to be landed with some 60,000 books in the heart of London and to be told: 'Find friends and introduce them to your problems.'"<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Fritz Saxl, *The History of Warburg's Library*, in Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An intellectual biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 325–38; see also Gertrud Bing, *Ricordo di F. Saxl (1890–1948)*, in Fritz Saxl, *La storia delle immagini* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1965), 196f.; Eric N. Warburg, *The transfer of the Warburg Institute to England in 1933*, in "Annual Report of The Warburg Institute," 1952–53, 13–16.



PART ONE

ANCIENT *TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM*





PHYSICS AS PHILOSOPHY OF HAPPINESS:  
THE TRANSMISSION OF SCIENTIFIC TENETS IN EPICURUS

Emidio Spinelli

The aim of this paper is clear and the boundaries of its content can be distinctly indicated. It wants to examine the communicative strategies in the mutual relationship between philosophy, ethics and science in the ancient world. The best case study, apart from any interesting considerations about other thinkers and their solutions,<sup>1</sup> is represented in my opinion by Epicurus's doctrine. Its overall structure shows without compromise the systematic links between a coherent and precise physical account of the world and the moral flavor of a goal or *telos* truly at the disposal of human beings. Behind such a global structure, one can detect the necessity of a special transmission (or *translatio*, indeed) linked to the most relevant points of a well-grounded atomistic theory and settled on the strategic skills indispensable to granting the efficacy of a reliable communication of such doctrines. The final step in all these efforts undoubtedly lies in the ethical message of the "Epicurean gospel," which intends to guarantee tranquility and absence of anguish with respect to any alleged difficulty in our lives.

If we try to establish something firmly about Epicurus's communicative skills, we can perhaps begin with a first and safe starting-point: he was undoubtedly a great author and a great writer. For sure, not only does "our philosopher [have] abundance of witnesses to attest his unsurpassed goodwill to all men,"<sup>2</sup> his stylistic attitudes in particular were highly appreciated. As we read in Diogenes Laertius, "the terms he used for things were the ordinary terms, and Aristophanes the grammarian credits him with a very characteristic style. He was so lucid a writer that in the work

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<sup>1</sup> One might think, for example, of Heraclitus and his *skoteinotes* (see 22 A 3 D.K.) or Gorgias and his rhetorical art (see e.g. 82 B 3 and 11 D.K.) or finally Plato's contradictory critique against the communicative power of writing, as attested at the end of his *Phaedrus* or in *Epistle VII* (for a first account of this difficult question, see Franco Trabattoni, *La verità nascosta: Oralità e scrittura in Platone e nella cultura greca classica* (Roma: Carocci, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Diogenes Laertius X 9 (Robert Drew Hicks, tr., *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979), vol. II, 537).

*On rhetoric* he makes clearness the sole requisite.”<sup>3</sup> Nor can we underestimate, beyond the powerful quality of his writing, the quantitative relevance of his works, since “Epicurus was a most prolific author and eclipsed all before him in the number of his writings: for they amount to about three hundred rolls, and contain not a single citation from other authors; it is Epicurus himself who speaks throughout.”<sup>4</sup>

The quality and quantity of Epicurus’s philosophical production satisfy the exigency of a real efficacy in the field of scientific communication as well as the necessity of avoiding any empty or idle talk about the most important aspects of our existence. Behind such philosophical-linguistic guidelines there is a strong theoretical premise, clearly expressed in a famous passage of his *Letter to Herodotus*:

In the first place, Herodotus, you must understand what it is that words denote, in order that by reference to this we may be in a position to test opinions, inquiries, or problems, so that our proofs may not run on untested ad infinitum, nor the terms we use be empty of meaning. For the primary signification of every term employed must be clearly seen, and ought to need no proving; this being necessary, if we are to have something to which the point at issue or the problem or the opinion before us can be referred.<sup>5</sup>

Epicurus’s urgent need is unequivocal. Clarity and efficacy of the linguistic form represent a sort of propaedeutic mean with respect to all the contents Epicurus wants to summarize.<sup>6</sup> In line of principle, therefore, one

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., X 13 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 543). A consequence of Epicurus’s appreciation of *sapheneia* (on this important stylistic feature see at least Guido Milanese, *Lucida carmina. Comunicazione e scrittura da Epicuro a Lucrezio* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989) as well as, especially in Philodemus, Michael Erler, “*Epitèdeuein asapheian*,” *Cronache Ercolanesi* 21 (1991), 83–8) may be detected in his preference for the *syggrammata* and his critique against any philosophical value attributed to poetry: see Graziano Arrighetti, *Poesia, poetiche e storia nella riflessione dei Greci. Studi* (Pisa: Giardini editori, 2006), 322–24.

<sup>4</sup> Diogenes Laertius X 26 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 555). For a useful survey of the books written by Epicurus and his followers, see Tiziano Dorandi, *Le corpus épicurien*, in Alain Gigandet–Pierre-Marie Morel (éds.), *Lire Épicure et les épicuriens* (Paris: PUF, 2007), 29–48.

<sup>5</sup> Epicurus *Letter to Herodotus* 37–38 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 567): on this important passage see now Francesco Verde’s useful commentary in *Epicuro. Epistola a Erodoto*, intr. Emidio Spinelli, tr./comm. Francesco Verde (Roma: Carocci, 2010), 77–80.

<sup>6</sup> On the possible role played in this case by the Peripatetic Praxiphanes (maybe a teacher of Epicurus: see Diogenes Laertius X 13) see Mario Capasso, “Prassifane, Epicuro e Filodemo: A proposito di Diog. Laert. X 13 e Philod. *Poem.* V IX 10–X 1,” *Elenchos* 5 (1984), 391–415. In addition, the Epicurean appeal to clarity in any “linguistic game” should be linked to the refusal of new expressions or nouns (see, for example, Epicurus *Letter to*

has to agree on what underlies any term: if, and only if, we grasp clearly the basically empirical content of each verbal expression, will it be possible for us to go further in any kind of research. It seems that Epicurus is here proposing a sort of “zetetic methodology” founded on the firm basis of a language<sup>7</sup> far from any ambiguity. This is the only way in which we can “discriminate” things and at the same time eliminate any risk of *apodeixeis* condemned to the vanity of an empty regress *ad infinitum*. In order to reach such a goal, the content of our verbal expressions must be absolutely certain and indubitable; and—as Conche rightly points out—what guarantees certainty and avoids any possible ambiguity is the “basic notion” empirically formed, without unnecessary additions by our opinions and/or judgments.<sup>8</sup> By individuating such a philosophically granted linguistic form and by sharing it with other people equally convinced of its efficacy, Epicurus establishes the methodological presuppositions of the factual development of his doctrine.

In order to fulfill the requirements just highlighted, he decides to pursue a “double register” of communication. Since he wants to enlarge the actual target of his philosophical message and let it penetrate widely to *all* human beings, without differences of gender, social status, political position and so on, he makes use of two different types of writings. On the one hand we find the thirty-seven books of his *On nature*: these were highly technical treatises on many general and/or specific physical themes and circulated only among a limited number of disciples. On the other hand,

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*Herodotus* 72 and some passages in his *Peri physeos*, esp. 17 I–II=31 11–2 Arrighetti): see also in this regard David N. Sedley, “Epicurus, *On nature*, Book XXVIII,” *Cronache Ercolanesi* 3 (1973), 5–83, esp. 17–34. On Epicurus’s terminology, apart from the invaluable lexicographic tool offered by Hermann Usener, *Glossarium Epicureum*, edendum curaverunt M. Gigante et W. Schmid (Roma: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1977) and by Inga Lisa Thyresson, *The particles in Epicurus* (Malmö: Gotab, 1977), see also some useful considerations in Knut Kleve, “Zur epikureischen Terminologie,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 38 (1963), 25–31 and (esp. on relevant stylistic features) Cesare Brescia, *Ricerche sulla lingua e sullo stile di Epicuro* (Napoli: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1955).

<sup>7</sup> On Epicurus’s account of language see now Tim O’Keefe, *Epicureanism* (Durham: Acumen, 2010), ch. 6.

<sup>8</sup> See Marcel Conche, *Épicure. Lettres et Maximes* (Paris: PUF, 1987), 127; see also Gisela Striker, *The problem of the criterion*, in S. Everson (ed.), *Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 147–48; Guido Milanese, *Aspetti del rapporto fra tra denominazione e referenzialità in Epicuro e nella tradizione epicurea*, in Gabriele Giannantoni-Marcello Gigante (eds.), *Epicureismo greco e romano* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1996) vol. I, 269–86; for a very original solution see Anthony A. Long, “Aisthesis, Prolepsis and Linguistic Theory in Epicurus,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 18 (1971), 114–33; finally, very usefully and clearly, see also Jürgen Hammerstaedt, *Il ruolo della prolepsis epicurea*, in Giannantoni-Gigante, *Epicureismo greco e romano*, vol. I, 221–37.

Epicurus has a completely different approach and employs new or at any rate peculiar literary genres (for example: letter, sentences and summaries), thanks to which he can *also* disclose the “secrets” of his atomistic theory and his ethical tenets to people who do not require any technical knowledge of those philosophical domains, but who do need elementary and reliable notions that will be useful in guiding their lives toward the ultimate goal of human happiness.

This Epicurean strategy of a double plan of composition is decisive not only from a formal point of view, but also from a moral (and even “political”) perspective, because it does not want to exclude *anyone* from taking advantage of scientific doctrines explicitly presented by Epicurus not as the final step of a vain theoretical leisure but rather as a concrete tool for reaching the best condition with respect to everyday life and its troubles. Such a “revolutionary” solution is vividly attested just at the beginning of Epicurus’s *Letter to Herodotus*:

Epicurus to Herodotus, greetings:

For those who are unable to study carefully all my physical writings or to go into the longer treatises at all, I have myself prepared an epitome of the whole system, Herodotus, to preserve in the memory enough of the principal doctrines, to the end that on every occasion they may be able to aid themselves on the most important points, so far as they take up the study of Physics. Also those who have made some advance in the survey of the entire system ought to keep in their minds the mark of the principal headings in which an elementary outline of the whole treatment of the subject is summarized. For a comprehensive view is often required, the details but seldom. To the former, then—the main heads—we must continually return, and must memorize them so far as to get a valid conception of the facts, as well as the means of discovering all the details exactly when once the general outlines are rightly understood and remembered; since it is the privilege of the mature student to make a ready use of his conceptions by referring every one of them to elementary facts and simple terms. For it is impossible to gather up the results of continuous diligent study of the entirety of things, unless we can embrace in short formulas and hold in mind all that might have been accurately expressed even to the minutest detail.

Hence, since such a course is of service to all who take up natural science, I, who devote to the subject my continuous energy and reap the calm enjoyment of a life like this, have prepared for you just such an epitome and manual of the doctrines as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Epicurus *Letter to Herodotus* 35–37 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 565 and 567, slightly modified); see also Anna Angeli, “L’esattezza scientifica in Epicuro e Filodemo,” *Cronache Ercolanesi* 15 (1985), 67–69.

The text helps to identify some key features of Epicurus's intention.<sup>10</sup> First of all he wants to gain a widespread audience: *all the people* are in the condition of understanding the intended addresses of his message and benefiting from it. His "Garden" does not require any prerequisite nor foster or presuppose any prejudice, since it is open even to slaves and women;<sup>11</sup> for this reason Epicurus begins his *Letter to Menoeceus* by stressing the special role of philosophy (*his* philosophy, obviously), for, at any stage of our life, "we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed towards attaining it."<sup>12</sup> The way to accomplish the task just described is clearly propounded at the beginning of his *Letter to Herodotus*: the disciple, at any level, has to pay attention to Epicurean physical tenets and especially to keep them actively alive in his memory, so that he can recall and apply them, if and when he needs.<sup>13</sup> We have here two

<sup>10</sup> On this question and on the different kinds of "summaries" typical of the Epicurean tradition see first of all Anna Angeli, "Compendi, *eklogai*, *tetrapharmakos*: Due capitoli di dissenso nell'epicureismo," *Cronache Ercolanesi* 16 (1986), 53–66 and Anna Angeli (ed.), *Filodemo. Agli amici di scuola* (PHerc. 1005) (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1988), esp. 37ff.: see also Ilsetraut Hadot, "Épicure et l'enseignement philosophique hellénistique et romain," in *Association Guillaume Budé, Actes VIII<sup>e</sup> Congrès*, Paris 5–10 avril 1968 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1969), 347–54; Michael Erler, *Epikur-Die Schule Epikurs-Lukrez*, in Helmut Flashar (Hrsg.), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe. *Die Philosophie der Antike*, 4. *Die hellenistische Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe & co., 1994), 88–89 and Mauro Tulli, *L'epitome di Epicuro e la trasmissione del sapere nel Medioplatonismo*, in Michael Erler (Hrsg.)-Robert Bees (in Zusammenarbeit mit), *Epikureismus in der späten Republik und der Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 111. More generally on the so-called *Kompendienliteratur* see Mario Untersteiner, *Problemi di filologia filosofica* (Milano: Cisalpino, 1980), esp. 51–53 and 92–97.

<sup>11</sup> See again Diogenes Laertius X 6–7 and 21; about Leontius see also fr. 19 and 28 Usener (along with fr. 436, 30 and 227a Usener); for other relevant bibliographical references see Wolfgang Schmid, *Epikur*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* V (1961), 723–26 and André-Jean Festugière, *Épicure et ses dieux* (deuxième édition corrigée, Paris: PUF, 1968), 29 and 36–42.

<sup>12</sup> Epicurus *Letter to Menoeceus* 122 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 649).

<sup>13</sup> According to Diocles, Epicurus "used to train his friends in committing his treatises to memory" (Diogenes Laertius X 12, tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 541). On this "mnemotechnic training" inside the Garden see at least Diskin Clay, "Epicurus' Last Will and Testament," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 55 (1973), 252–80 as well as some interesting considerations in Schmid, *Epikur*, 743–5 and in Francis Wolff, *L'être, l'homme, le disciple. Figures philosophiques empruntées à des Anciens* (Paris: PUF, 2000), esp. ch. VIII. As to the "devotional cult" towards Epicurus, well and constantly attested by many and different sources (see e.g. Seneca *Ep.* XXV 4–5), see Schmid, *Epikur*, 745–55 (with other textual references) and also Diskin Clay, "The Cults of Epicurus," *Cronache Ercolanesi* 16 (1986), 11–28; Mario Capasso, *Comunità senza rivolta: Quattro saggi sull'epicureismo* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1987), 25–37; Michael Erler, *Epicurus as deus mortalis: Homoiosis theoi and Epicurean Self*, in Dorothea Frede-André Laks (eds.), *Traditions of*

different but interrelated claims: the Epicurean philosopher has to be able to “seize the day” [*carpe diem*], to make use of the *kairos*, for example in a situation of alleged embarrassment or puzzlement, but he can do that only if and because he is able to retrieve from the well-ordered storehouse of his memory the appropriate doctrine or principle for obtaining the right answer and conquering what Epicurus defines as *galene*, namely “stillness of the sea” or, not metaphorically, calmness of life. The doctrinal focus lies in this case—once again in a double sense—both in a special function attributed to *theoria*, which must be intended as proper observation of nature and its structure, and in a form of concrete *boetheia*, i.e. in a substantial help based on the exercise of memory.<sup>14</sup> One cannot forget, in addition, that when as Epicureans we speak of memory we refer to a thoroughly materialistic process, as confirmed by the use of the technical term *typos*, the mark impressed in the atomistic cluster of our soul.<sup>15</sup> In order to reinforce such a process Epicurus offers to his students the new device of his correct *epitome*, restricted to the main aspects of his physics but useful also for penetrating other and most specific questions related to the complete clarification of the world’s make-up.<sup>16</sup> Epicurus’s *Letter*, therefore, seems to be of much greater interest not only for the beginners and “poor” people, but also for advanced scholars, since they can keep together both the details of the physical doctrine and the general framework of the systematic account, praised by Epicurus as the best assurance against any risk of *kenodoxia* or vain opinion.

Having clarified the double purpose of Epicurus’s *epitome*, it is easy to conclude that its audience cannot be identified with a single, limited kind of reader. By adopting the literary form of the summary and by insisting on the necessity of using the same communicative strategy, he tries to

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*Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159–81.

<sup>14</sup> Useful observations on this question in Carlo Diano, *Scritti epicurei* (Firenze: Olschki, 1974), 289–90; see also Clay, “Epicurus’ Last Will and Testament,” 260ff. and now Pierre-Marie Morel (éd.), *Épicure. Lettres, maximes et autres textes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), 27–8.

<sup>15</sup> On the Epicurean notion of *typos* see Domenico Lembo, “*Typos e sympatheia* in Epicuro,” *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia della Università di Napoli* 24 (1981–1982), 17–58; see also Morel (éd.), *Épicure. Lettres, maximes et autres textes*, 129, n. 2. For a significant philosophical antecedent see the example of the table of wax in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (191C–192D), discussed also by Aristotle in his *de anima* and *de memoria et reminiscencia* and repropounded by ancient Stoicism, especially by Cleanthes to account for the materialistic mechanism of apprehension (see at least SVF I 484 and II 58).

<sup>16</sup> See also Angeli, *Filodemo. Gli amici di scuola*, 45.



address his message to different listeners and readers. Epicurean students do not have the same philosophical background and intelligence; nonetheless a faithful and precise summary can reach at least three different categories:<sup>17</sup>

1. Those who master the most difficult technicalities of the Epicurean system in all their atomistic and materialistic features;
2. Those who are *proficientes*, but still “on the road” while attempting to learn the central elements of that scientific picture of the world;
3. Those who are really at the beginning of the difficult training inside the Garden and need therefore only introductory notions.

The summary offered by Epicurus can be managed by all those categories according to their different and flexible capacity to apply its essential content to disparate situations and events. What guarantees a positive and successful result, at any rate, is the fact that Epicurus's *epitome* does pursue the highest level of exactness or *akribeia*, so that there is no risk of banalities or even distortions as to the explanation of the real properties of reality. The vocabulary of *akribeia* seems indeed to distinguish the main passages of the *Letter to Herodotus*<sup>18</sup> and at the same time induces immediately (and will induce later) many disciples inside the school to pay careful attention to the philological details in order to refrain from any dangerous innovation.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the opening passage of the *Letter to Herodotus* and from what Epicurus repeats at the end of the same work,<sup>20</sup> we can therefore

<sup>17</sup> On this tripartition see again Angeli, *Filodemo. Agli amici di scuola*, 38ff. and also Tulli, *L'epitome di Epicuro e la trasmissione del sapere nel Medioplatonismo*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Very useful on this topic: Angeli, “L'esattezza scientifica in Epicuro e Filodemo”.

<sup>19</sup> On this peculiar form of *philologia medicans* see Michael Erler, *Philologia medicans. Comment les Épicuriens lisaient les textes de leur maître?*, in Thomas Bénatouil-Valéry Laurand-André Macé (éds.), *L'Épicurisme antique* (Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 2003) 217–53.

<sup>20</sup> “Here then, Herodotus, you have the chief doctrines of Physics in the form of a summary. So that, if this statement be accurately retained and take effect, a man will, I make no doubt, be incomparably better equipped than his fellows, even if he should never go into all the exact details. For he will clear up for himself many of the points which I have worked out in detail in my complete exposition; and the summary itself, if borne in mind, will be of constant service to him. It is of such a sort that those who are already tolerably, or even perfectly, well acquainted with the details can, by analysis of what they know into such elementary perceptions as these, best prosecute their researches in physical science as a whole; while those, on the other hand, who are not altogether entitled to rank as mature students can in silent fashion and as quick as thought run over the doctrines most

enlarge our perspective and contend that Epicurus's global scope is not exclusively the exhibition of the greatest precision in the scientific treatment of his *physiologia*. He aims rather at conducting his disciples and his readers toward a higher goal, namely the ethical end of *ataraxia* along with the faithful confidence or *pistis* in its achievement. This overall perspective and this methodological effort are clearly and once again stated also at the beginning of his *Letter to Pythocles*,<sup>21</sup> where Epicurus seems to confirm the undeniable interrelationship between a global approach to any scientific or philosophical question and a minute analysis on its elements of detail:

Epicurus to Pythocles, greeting. In your letter to me, of which Cleon was the bearer, you continue to show me affection which I have merited by my devotion to you, and you try, not without success, to recall the considerations which make for a happy life. To aid your memory you ask me for a clear and concise statement respecting celestial phenomena; for what we have written on this subject elsewhere is, you tell me, hard to remember, although you have my books constantly with you. I was glad to receive your request and am full of pleasant expectations. We will then complete our writing and grant all you ask. Many others besides you will find these reasonings useful, and especially those who have but recently made acquaintance with the true story and those who are attached to pursuits which go deeper than any part of ordinary education. So you will do well to take and learn them and get them up quickly along with the short epitome in my letter to Herodotus.

In the first place, remember that, like everything else, knowledge of celestial phenomena, whether taken along with other things or in isolation, has no other end in view than peace of mind and firm conviction.<sup>22</sup>

The efficacy of this *Letter*, in its function as doctrinal *epitome* about celestial phenomena, lies in the way it summarizes and simplifies important questions treated in other, surely more difficult Epicurean works. In this way, it can offer a precious aid not only to all those disciples who do not have technical or detailed knowledge about those topics and are also

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important for their peace of mind" (Epicurus *Letter to Herodotus* 37–38, tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 611 and 613).

<sup>21</sup> On the authenticity of this *Letter* see now Dorandi, *Le corpus épicurien*, 30; on its content, useful observations in Thomas Bénatouil, *La méthode épicurienne des explications multiples*, in Bénatouil-Laurand-Macé (éds.), *L'Épicurisme antique*, 15–47; see also Lisa Taub, *Cosmology and meteorology*, in James Warren (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 105–24.

<sup>22</sup> Epicurus *Letter to Pythocles* 84–85 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 613 and 615).



too “submerged” by everyday problems and troubles, but also for those *proficientes* or even mature Epicureans, who can safely master the more specific and scientific contents of Epicurus’s doctrine.

His *Letter to Pythocles*—as well as the rest of the *corpus* attested in Diogenes Laertius, book X—can therefore also be considered as an indispensable mnemotechnic tool, thanks to which we can avoid any empty dispute on abstract topics and give the right direction to our everyday life. The final goal of this and other tools, in fact, is not restricted to the domain of theoretical knowledge or “pure” scientific satisfaction, but extends immediately to the conduct of life and assumes the ethical weight so evidently pursued by Epicurus and his school.

Notwithstanding the richness and epistemological appeal of Epicurus’s complex *physiologia* we ought not to consider it as the final step or even the highest point of his philosophical system. Epicurean physics must be evaluated in comparison with other aspects and therefore considered in its genuine function. The system of thought proposed by Epicurus undoubtedly has different parts, but they are not on the same level nor reciprocally interwoven according to that circularity characteristic of the Stoic system.<sup>23</sup> In Epicurus—notwithstanding some obvious cross-references among the different elements of his doctrine—one can rather detect a clear “direction” and consequently an increasing degree of importance with regard to the traditional parts of philosophy admitted by Hellenistic schools (and even by Xenocrates before). First of all we find the gnoseological/epistemological section—the so-called “canonic,” the theory about our standards or criteria of truth—which provides valid and reliable tools both for investigating the realm of nature and for determining any kind of choice and avoidance. Hence we have the “physiological” section, which supplies the principles indispensable for understanding the materialistic framework of nature. In doing that it opens the way towards the third part of the system, i.e. the ethical one. It is here that we have to locate the

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<sup>23</sup> See Diogenes Laertius VII 40 and also some important comments in Victor Goldschmidt, *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps* (Paris: Vrin, 1979), 64–67; on the role of Zeno for this systematic Stoic approach see at least Jaap Mansfeld, *Zeno on the Unity of Philosophy*, in Theodore Scaltsas–Andrew S. Mason (eds.), *The Philosophy of Zeno* (Larnaka: Master Print Demetriades, 2002), 59–79, while for other details see Emidio Spinelli, *Ancient Stoicism, Robust Epistemology and Moral Philosophy*, in Peter Machamer–Gereon Wolters (eds.), *Thinking about Causes: From Greek Philosophy to Modern Physics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 37–46.

culmination of Epicurus's doctrine, since it represents the factual *telos* of his philosophy as powerful therapy against any kind of moral evil.<sup>24</sup>

If we want to appreciate the real meaning of this therapeutic turning-point, we can read the *Key doctrines* 11 and 12. These describe the functional relationship of subordination between physics and ethics and confirm that correct knowledge about the constitution of reality is the preliminary instrument for obtaining happiness designated as pure pleasure due to the absence of pain in the body (*aponia*) and of trouble in the soul (*ataraxia*).

11. If we had never been molested by alarms at celestial and atmospheric phenomena, nor by the misgiving that death somehow affects us, nor by neglect of the proper limits of pains and desires, we should have had no need to study natural science.

12. It would be impossible to banish fear on matters of the highest importance, if a man did not know the nature of the whole universe, but lived in dread of what the legends tell us. Hence without the study of nature there was no enjoyment of unmixed pleasures.<sup>25</sup>

Epicurus's argument is shaped in hypothetical form (if not-p, then not-q; but p, therefore q), but wants to be strongly prescriptive. The Epicurean philosopher does not turn his mind towards nature according to a pure theoretical approach, without any additional (or better moral) interest. Rather, he devotes himself to the study of reality only because he knows that this can erase the roots of our troubles and puzzles. After coping with the consistent explanation of our world (as well as of other infinite worlds around us) any motive of anxiety will disappear and we shall live more and more in conformity with nature.<sup>26</sup> No dangerous role on the part of the gods,<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See paradigmatically fr. 221 Usener; on the role of the *philosophia medicans* as an Epicurean *topos* see at least Marcello Gigante, "Philosophia medicans in Filodemo," *Cronache Ercolanesi* 5 (1975), 53–61.

<sup>25</sup> Epicurus *Key doctrines* 11–12 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 667); on the "cathartic" and "didactic" function of Epicurus's *physiologia* see also Georgios Manolidis, *Die Rolle der Physiologie in der Philosophie Epikurs* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenaenum, 1987), 104–13.

<sup>26</sup> On this question see Pierre-Marie Morel, *Épicure et la fin de la nature*, in Bénatouil-Laurand-Macé (éds.), *L'Épicurisme antique*, 167–96 and now Pierre-Marie Morel, *Épicure: La nature et la raison* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), 161–206.

<sup>27</sup> They do not indeed have any "providential" function or any positive or negative interest in human affairs, since they live completely undisturbed and happy in the *intermundia*, as attested by later sources: see e.g. Cicero *De natura deorum* 1.18; *De finibus* 2.75; *De divinatione* 2.40; Philodemus *De dis* 3.8.31. For a first survey on this difficult topic see at least Mariacarina Santoro (ed.), [Demetrio Lacone] [*La forma del dio*] (PHerc. 1055) (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2000), esp. 43–65 and José Kany-Turpin, *Les dieux. Représentation*

no negative or terrifying value of our death,<sup>28</sup> no unbearable level of pain,<sup>29</sup> no perspective of unattainable pleasures<sup>30</sup> will hold our everyday lives in check. This is the confident announcement of the so-called *tetrapharmakos*, explicitly illustrated in the rich argumentative texture of Epicurus's *Letter to Menoeceus*, concisely repeated in the first four *Key doctrines* or laconically abridged by Philodemus thanks to a formula that is immediately helpful to everyone (slaves and women included, one may suppose): "God presents no fears, death no worries. And while good is readily attainable, evil is readily endurable."<sup>31</sup>

For securing the welcome outcome of happiness it is sufficient, from the point of view of efficacious communication tools, to meditate on the main precepts of the Epicurean message, to keep them in one's own memory, to exercise oneself and use them at the right moment in order to live "as a god among men."<sup>32</sup> Happiness is not too far away; instead it is here for us—for all of us—close at hand. The core of the Epicurean ethical perspective is characterized by a continuous tension towards a simple life or rather towards the reduction to a sort of "ground zero" with respect to every desire and its satisfaction. Pointing to a solid idea of philosophy as a *techne peri ton bion* and as a source of invulnerability,<sup>33</sup> the central

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*mentale des dieux, pitié et discours théologique*, in Gigandet-Morel (éd.), *Lire Épicure et les épicuriens*, 145–65.

<sup>28</sup> Since that is absolutely nothing within the radically materialistic framework of the Epicurean doctrine: on this topic see at least James Warren, *Removing Fear*, in Warren (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, 125–41; more in detail, on the Epicurean notion of death, see also James Warren, *Facing Death. Epicurus and his Critics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) and Voula Tsouana, "Rationality and the fear of death in Epicurean philosophy," *Rhizai* 3 (2006), 79–117 (esp. on Philodemus's position).

<sup>29</sup> On this specific topic see also Valéry Laurand, *Le traitement épicurien de la douleur*, in Bénatouil-Laurand-Macé (éd.), *L'Épicurisme antique*, 91–117.

<sup>30</sup> On this question see now Raphael Woolf, *Pleasure and desire*, in Warren (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, 158–78.

<sup>31</sup> Philodemus *To the school-fellows* (PHerc. 1005 col. 5.9–13 ed. Angeli), tr. Anthony A. Long-David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 *Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 156; for a useful comment on this passage see Angeli, *Filodemo. Agli amici di scuola*, 261–70 and 50–61; see finally Francesco Sbordone, "Il quadrifarmaco epicureo," *Cronache Ercolanesi* 13 (1983), 117–9.

<sup>32</sup> *Letter to Menoeceus* 135 (tr. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of eminent philosophers*, II, 659); see also *Letter to Pythocles* 116. On this peculiar form of "assimilation to god" see especially Erler, *Epicurus as deus mortalis: Homoiosis theoi and Epicurean Self*.

<sup>33</sup> One of the best global surveys of Epicurus's ethics is still Phillip Mitsis, *Epicurus' Ethical Theory: The Pleasures of Invulnerability* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); useful suggestions and observations also in Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. ch. IV.16.

grammar of Epicurus's ethics does not need special adjectives. What is important is the easy and readily graspable *zen*, the existence in its simplest forms, and not any theoretically articulated concept of *eu zen* recommended by other philosophical schools.<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the inquiry—interesting both from a historical point of view and for the proposal of a *Weltanschauung* radically orientated towards the things of this world—about possible polemical targets, a concluding remark is needed: the undisturbed condition of such a simple life, which means at the same time living simply,<sup>35</sup> is the final stage of a long and careful process, at the beginning of which Epicurus places the precise transmission of his scientific theories as well as its powerful impact on the conduct of our lives.

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<sup>34</sup> See *Vatican Sayings* 33: "The flesh's cry is not to be hungry or thirsty or cold. For one who is in these states and expects to remain so could rival even Zeus in happiness," tr. Long-Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1, 116.

<sup>35</sup> See therefore the Epicurean praise of frugality (see paradigmatically fr. 182 Usener), based on a strict concept of self-sufficiency (here too see paradigmatically *Vatican Sayings* 68).

FROM ARISTOTLE TO STRATO OF LAMPUSACUS:  
THE *TRANSLATIO* OF THE NOTION OF TIME IN THE  
EARLY PERIPATETIC TRADITION

Francesco Verde

Strato's philosophy plays a very significant role within the early Peripatetic tradition through his discussion of some aspects of Aristotle's *Physics*.<sup>1</sup> With great argumentative skill, Strato discussed one of the most important notions for ancient physical theories: time. By taking some late sources into account (for instance, Sextus Empiricus and Simplicius), this paper will examine both Strato's criticism of the Aristotelian use of the concept

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<sup>1</sup> For the physical part of Strato's philosophy, see the pioneering study by Georges Rodier, *La Physique de Straton de Lampsaque* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1890; repr. Charleston: BiblioBazaar 2008) (on time, especially 73–82); Hermann Diels, "Über das physikalische System des Straton," *Sitzungsberichte der preußischen Akad. Wiss. Berlin* (1893), 101–27 (repr. in Hermann Diels, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte der antiken Philosophie*, hrsg. von Walter Burkert, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969, 239–65) (for the Preface of Heron's *Pneumatica*) and, on the same matter, Karin Tybjerg, *Hero of Alexandria's Mechanical Treatises: Between Theory and Practice*, in Astrid Schürmann (Hrsg.), *Physik/Mechanik* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005), 204–26, esp. 213ff. See also Hans B. Gottschalk, *Strato of Lampsacus: Some Texts* (Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society: Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society/Literary and Historical Section, 1965), and especially Matthias Gatzemeier, *Die Naturphilosophie des Straton von Lampasakos: Zur Geschichte des Problems der Bewegung im Bereich des frühen Peripatos* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1970) (on the notion of time, 125–28) and Luciana Repici, *La natura e l'anima: Saggi su Stratone di Lampasaco* (Torino: Tirrenia Stampatori, 1988) (for a review of this important book, see Robert W. Sharples, "Review of Luciana Repici, *La natura e l'anima: Saggi su Stratone di Lampasaco*," *The Classical Review* 39 (1989), 261–2); on Strato's psychology see Giancarlo Movia, *Anima e intelletto: Ricerche sulla psicologia peripatetica da Teofrasto a Cratippo* (Padova: Antenore, 1968), 111–50. For other aspects of Strato's Physics, in particular his concept of the void, see David Furley, *Strato's Theory of Void*, in Jürgen Wiesner (Hrsg.), *Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet, Erster Band, Aristoteles und seine Schule* (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 1985), 594–609 (repr. in David Furley, *Cosmic Problems. Essays on Greek and Roman Philosophy of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 149–60); David N. Sedley, *Philoponus' Conception of Space*, in Richard Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 140–53, esp. 140–3; Keimpe Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 1995), 60–9, and Daryn Lehoux, "All Voids Large and Small Being: A Discussion of Place and Void in Strato of Lampsacus' Matter Theory," *Apeiron* 32 (1999), 1–36. For the epistemology of Strato, see especially Margherita Isnardi Parente, *Filosofia e scienza nel pensiero ellenistico* (Napoli: Morano 1991), 123–48. In general about Strato's philosophical position now see Marie-Laurence Desclos and William W. Fortenbaugh (eds.), *Strato of Lampsacus: Text, Translation, and Discussion* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2011).

of number (*arithmos*) in the explanation of time and his “new” definition of *chronos* as quantity (*poson*). The aim of this paper is twofold: on the one hand, to define Strato’s concept of time; on the other, to investigate whether and to what extent we can actually talk of a “controversy” between Aristotle<sup>2</sup> and Strato.<sup>3</sup>

Diogenes Laertius<sup>4</sup> testifies that the concept of time was crucially important for the philosophical production of Strato (scholarch of the Lyceum after Theophrastus, in 288–286 BC); Diogenes, listing the works of the philosopher, also mentions a *Peri chronou*. The doctrinal “controversy” between Strato and Aristotle—if there ever was one—is covertly detectable in the pages of Sextus Empiricus’s *Against the Physicists* (*Adversus Mathematicos* [= *M*] 9–10), a source that like Simplicius is fundamental for any attempt to reconstruct the concept of time in Strato’s philosophy.<sup>5</sup> In the second book of *Against the Physicists* (*M* 10.155 = 82 Wehrli = 36 Sharples), Sextus makes a point that is highly significant for the purposes of the present enquiry:

It remains, then, to consider whether anything can move if some things are divided *ad infinitum* and others are reducible to indivisibles. And Strato the physicist in fact, took this view; for he supposed that times are reducible to indivisibles, but bodies and places are divided *ad infinitum*, and that the moving object moves over the whole of a divisible distance in an indivisible time all at once and not by gradations (translation by Robert G. Bury, *Sextus*

<sup>2</sup> The secondary literature on Aristotle’s notion of time is vast. I refer here to Paul F. Conen, *Die Zeittheorie des Aristoteles* (München: Beck, 1964); Jacques M. Dubois, *Le temps et l’instant selon Aristote* (Paris: De Brouwer, 1967); Catherine Collobert, *Aristote, Traité du temps* (Paris: Kimé, 1995); Elena Cavagnaro, *Aristotele e il tempo: Analisi di Physica, IV 10–14* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002); Enrico Berti, *Nuovi studi aristotelici: Fisica, Antropologia e Metafisica* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005), 81–113; Ursula Coope, *Time for Aristotle: Physics IV.10–14* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), and David Bostock, *Space, Time, Matter, and Form: Essays on Aristotle’s Physics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 135–57.

<sup>3</sup> On this question, see Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 377–9; see already Id., *Atoms and Time Atoms*, in Norman Kretzmann (ed.), *Infinity and Continuity in Ancient and Medieval Thought* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 37–86, esp. 70–2.

<sup>4</sup> Diogenes Laertius 5.59 (= 18 Wehrli = 1 Sharples).

<sup>5</sup> On the methodology of Simplicius, now see Han Baltussen, *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius: The Methodology of a Commentator* (London: Duckworth, 2008), 14–53; on Simplicius’s *Corollarium de tempore*, see especially Hubert Meyer, *Das Corollarium de Tempore des Simplicios und die Aporien des Aristoteles zur Zeit* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1969), 23–162; Erwin Sonderegger, *Simplikios: Über die Zeit: Ein Kommentar zum Corollarium de tempore* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) and Pantelis Golitsis, *Les Commentaires de Simplicius et de Jean Philopon à la Physique d’Aristote* (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 168–74.

*Empiricus. Against the Physicists: Against the Ethicists* (London-Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann-Harvard University Press, 1968), 289).

Strato believes that time is *indivisible* while bodies and places, or spaces, are infinitely *divisible*; consequently, as time itself is divided, what it moves will cover a distance that is completely rather than only “individually” divisible. According to Strato, a body *A* moves in an *indivisible* time *B* but across a fully *divisible* distance *C*; this position is entirely *sui generis* because it binds a wholly divisible space to a time devoid of parts.

It is also important to note here that Sextus’s information about Strato’s notion of time is very problematic: according to Sextus (= 82 Wehrli = 36 Sharples), Strato maintained that time is indivisible; according to Simplicius (*Corollarium de tempore, in Aristotelis Physica commentaria* [= *CT in Ph.*] 788.36 Diels = 75 Wehrli = 31 Sharples), he upheld the continuity of time. If Simplicius’s information about Strato’s notion of the continuity of time is reliable, then—as David Sedley argues<sup>6</sup>—Strato was no “temporal atomist”; this, however, implies that Sextus completely misunderstood Strato’s position. I would prefer to adopt a more cautious approach and simply accept that Sextus’s account remains problematic.<sup>7</sup> Going back to the passage from Sextus, it is possible that the closing words *ou kata to proteron*—which stand in opposition to *athroun*—were used by Strato against Diodorus Cronus, who lived in the second half of the fourth century BC. Diodorus Cronus, Sextus reports,<sup>8</sup> was of the opinion that nothing moves but everything is moved. To support this doctrine, Diodorus

<sup>6</sup> David N. Sedley, “Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 203 (1977), 74–120, 89.

<sup>7</sup> This is a complex subject that I cannot closely examine here; on this question see however Carl Nauwerck, *De Stratone Lampsaceno philosopho disquisitio* (Berlin: Reimer, 1836), 35; now see Annick Jaulin, *Straton et la question du temps comme nombre du mouvement*, in Desclos-Fortenbaugh, *Strato of Lampsacus: Text, Translation, and Discussion*, 353–66, esp. 355–9. For Damascius’s passage (*On Plato’s Parmenides* 389, vol. 3 pp. 182.18–183.18 Westerink = 82, I Wehrli = 37 Sharples) on Strato’s concept of time, see especially Ernst G. Schmidt, “Straton-Zitate bei Damaskios,” *Museum Helveticum* 19 (1962), 218–22, as well as Sedley, “Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy,” 112 n. 83. On the relation between Damascius’s account of time and that of Strato, see Rodolfo Mondolfo, *L’infinito nel pensiero dell’antichità classica* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1956), 161–4.

<sup>8</sup> Sextus Empiricus *M* 10.85–87 (= 123 Döring = II F 13 SSR) and *Id. PH* 2.242, 245 and 3.71 (= II F 17 SSR); see too *Id. M* 10.119–20 (Nicholas Denyer, “The Atomism of Diodorus Cronus,” *Prudentia* 13 (1981), 33–45, 34 attributes this passage to Diodorus’s account, on which see too Michael J. White, *Agency and Integrality: Philosophical Themes in the Ancient Discussions of Determinism and Responsibility* (Dordrecht-Boston-Lancaster-Tokyo: Reidel, 1985), 72–75, and *Id.*, *The Continuous and the Discrete: Ancient Physical Theories from a Contemporary Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 259–73).



Cronus posited bodies devoid of parts; these indivisible bodies must necessarily be contained in places that are also devoid of parts. The body can move in neither a place devoid of parts (where it stands)—because it contains all (and in order to move it would need an area outside itself)—nor in a place where it is not yet: for if it is not in the place where it is not yet, then it cannot move within it.

What Diodorus infers from all this is that a body devoid of parts can move neither in the place where it is, nor in the place where it is not; and hence that there actually is no such thing as movement. According to Wehrli's first edition of *Straton von Lampsakos*,<sup>9</sup> Diodorus's arguments against motion might have been known to Strato, and so the doctrine reported by Sextus might be read as criticism specifically directed against Diodorus. In this context, Wehrli<sup>10</sup> stresses the fact that Strato probably became acquainted with Diodorus in Alexandria, while serving as tutor to Ptolemy Philadelphus. This idea, however, seems to have vanished from the second edition of *Straton von Lampsakos*.<sup>11</sup>

Diodorus rejects the idea of movement on the basis of the fact that both bodies and places are devoid of parts; Strato, by contrast, accepts movement only by virtue of the complete divisibility of the distances and places travelled by bodies. It is important to emphasize that Strato's theory about the indivisibility of time and divisibility of bodies and places could also plausibly be read in contrast to that of Aristotle. Aristotle had admitted that time is a continuous magnitude that, as such, must be divisible. According to him, time is always divisible and, as every change or movement occurs in time, every change or movement implies divisibility. Aristotle had actually shown that a body devoid of parts cannot change or move, if not by accident, unless time is made up of "moments" or "nows" (*nyn*), which by definition are indivisible. In this case, however, the movement of a body devoid of parts in a time made up of indivisible "moments" or "nows" would always have already happened, something absurd for Aristotle: any change or movement happens in time.<sup>12</sup> Strato, as if he were addressing the *aporiai* raised by Aristotle, not only denies that indivisible time can account for the motion of accidents, but also

<sup>9</sup> Fritz Wehrli, *Straton von Lampsakos, Die Schule des Aristoteles 5* (Basel: Schwabe, 1950).

<sup>10</sup> Wehrli, *Straton von Lampsakos*, 63.

<sup>11</sup> Fritz Wehrli, *Straton von Lampsakos, Die Schule des Aristoteles 5* (Basel: Schwabe, 1969).

<sup>12</sup> See also the next note.



argues that a divisible body can move along a divisible magnitude in an indivisible time.<sup>13</sup>

Sextus Empiricus (*M* 10.177 = part. 79a Wehrli = 35 Sharples), in his doxography on the notion of time, further refers to Strato's treatment of the question:

On this account Strato the physicist rejected this notion and said that time is "the measure of all motion and rest" (*metron pases kineseos kai mones*); for it is co-extensive with all moving objects when they are moving and with all immobile objects when they are motionless, and for this reason all things which exist exist in time (translation by Bury, *Sextus Empiricus. Against the Physicists: Against the Ethicists*, 299 and 301).

Strato defines time as "the measure of all motion and rest;" this definition is confirmed both by other passages in Sextus's works<sup>14</sup> and by Simplicius. The latter (*CT in Ph.* 789.15 Diels = 77 Wehrli = 31 Sharples) writes:

Strato raises a further difficulty; why should time be the number of the earlier and the later in process rather than in rest? For there is similarly an earlier and a later in rest (translation by James O. Urmson–Lucas Siorvanes, *Simplicius: Corollaries on Place and Time* (London: Duckworth, 1992), 109).

Simplicius, unlike Sextus, discusses Strato's definition. According to Strato, time is not only the number of "before" and "after" in movement, but these can also be found in rest. It is not true, therefore, that "before" and "after" only exist through movement: it is also possible to find these in a state of rest.

To return to *M* 10.177, it seems—at least according to Sextus's reference—that Strato drafted his concept of time both in continuity and potential "controversy" with Aristotle. There is continuity between Aristotle and Strato because the latter also regards time as measure (*metron*); according to Aristotle, time is the measure of the movement and being moved: if movement is in time, what this means is that movement is measured by time.<sup>15</sup> This association between time and measurement dates back to Antiphon the Sophist and Critolaus.<sup>16</sup> Speusippus, as reported by Plutarch,<sup>17</sup> described time as quantity (*poson*) in largely the same terms

<sup>13</sup> See Aristotle *Physics* 6.3.233b33–234a25; 6.237a17–28; 8.239a23–29; 10.240b8–241a6.

<sup>14</sup> Sextus Empiricus *PH* 3.137 (= 79b Wehrli = 35 app Sharples).

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle *Physics* 4.12.221a.

<sup>16</sup> Aetius 1.22.6 (318.22–23 Diels = 87 B 9 D.K.).

<sup>17</sup> Plutarch *Platonicae quaestiones* 8.1007A–B (= 53 Lang = 93 Isnardi Parente); see also Eduard Zeller–Rodolfo Mondolfo, *La filosofia dei Greci nel suo sviluppo storico*, Parte II: *Da*

as Strato in Simplicius's reference—which we shall soon examine—albeit with some significant differences. Therefore, even before Aristotle, time was linked to the concept of measure. Strato argues that time is the measure not only of movement but also of rest, and this philosophical doctrine—as reported by Sextus—appears to have been formulated in contrast to Aristotle, who held that time is only a measure of movement. Strato, in other words, rejected this definition (*apostas tesde tes ennoias*) and claimed that time measures both movement and rest. This may seem as a rather generic and ultimately “pointless” controversy, particularly considering that Aristotle had already asserted that time is not only the measure of movement (*kinesis*) but, “incidentally” (*kata symbebekos*), also of rest (*eremia*).<sup>18</sup>

To complete this philosophical picture, it is necessary to examine another passage from Sextus Empiricus (*M* 10.228):

Such were the views of these men; but Plato—and, as some say, Aristotle—declared that “time is the number of the prior and posterior in motion”; and Strato the physicist—and, as others say, Aristotle—that it is “the measure of motion and rest” (translation by Bury, *Sextus Empiricus. Against the Physicists: Against the Ethicists*, 323).

Sextus Empiricus in *M* 10.228 shows considerable uncertainty in attributing these definitions of time. The same sense of uncertainty occurs in *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes* [= *PH*] 3.137 but is completely absent from *M* 10.177, where Sextus credits Strato with a notion according to which—by contrast with Aristotle—time not only measures movement, but also rest. According to Aristotle too, time is a quantity that measures what is in motion and what is at rest (but could potentially move). This point is very important for our goal, because it means that the apparent terminological precision of Strato's definition against Aristotle is somewhat “illegitimate.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Sextus (or his source) is aware of the lack of

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*Socrate ad Aristotele*, volume VI: *Aristotele e i Peripatetici più antichi*, a cura di Armando Plebe (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1966), 506 n. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle *Physics* 4.12.221b7–23. It should be remarked, however, that the Aristotelian expression *kata symbebekos* is highly significant, as in this context it marks a meaningful difference between Strato's account and that of Aristotle. For another Aristotelian occurrence of *eremia*, see *Metaphysics* 1.7.988b4.

<sup>19</sup> See Gatzemeier, *Die Naturphilosophie des Straton von Lampsakos: Zur Geschichte des Problems der Bewegung im Bereich des frühen Peripatos*, 126: “Die Kritik Stratons ist also nicht berechtigt. Und wenn er die Zeit als *poson* (fr. 76 u. 78) oder, wie es die doxographische Überlieferung in fr. 79 a, b, c angibt, als Maß (*metron*) definiert, meint er dasselbe

legitimacy of Strato's controversy; it is likely that in doxographies or in the manuals used by Sextus someone had already pointed out how Strato's definition of time was largely consistent with what Aristotle had written in *Physics* 4.<sup>20</sup>

How to explain the deep divergence in Sextus's work between *M* 10.177 and *M* 10.228/*PH* 3.137, where he first attributes his definition of time to Strato and then to Strato and Aristotle? It is plausible that Sextus has drawn on several doxographical sources in *M* 10.177 and 10.228 (with *PH* 3.137). Moreover, Sextus Empiricus, as a skeptic philosopher, is interested not so much in the "purity" or "fairness" of doxographical sources as in the careful collection of *doxai* that will turn out to be completely aporetic; without this careful and systematic collection of dogmatic opinions, there can be no skeptic confutation. This does not exclude the possibility that a "controversy" actually took place between the Aristotelian position and that of Strato, but I believe that it is necessary to somewhat attenuate its importance and gravity. It is therefore quite acceptable to hold that Strato made his own assumptions about time, as Simplicius, Themistius and Philoponus report: I think that it is best to interpret his "controversy" with Aristotle in terms of emphasis or evidence rather than as a "doctrinal clash."

The comparison between Aristotle and evidence of Strato's philosophy from both Aristotelian commentators and Sextus is very useful for outlining the extent to which it is actually possible to speak of a doctrinal controversy between Strato and Aristotle. As already suggested, it is preferable to speak of an "adjustment" rather than real controversy, given that some characteristics of Strato's notion of time can already be found in Aristotle. Strato probably wanted to highlight or draw attention to some aspects of the Aristotelian definition of time which remained unclear or only implicit.<sup>21</sup>

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wie Aristoteles, der an anderen Stellen (z.B. 220 b 32 f., 221 b 7) ebenfalls vom Maß der Bewegung spricht."

<sup>20</sup> On this topic, see Julia Annas, "Sextus Empiricus and the Peripatetics," *Elenchos* 13 (1992), 201–31, esp. 221–2.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Morison, "Did Theophrastus Reject Aristotle's Account of Place?," *Phronesis* 55 (2010), 68–103, 101 deals with the *aporai* (reported by Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*) that Theophrastus raises to Aristotle's account of place. On this point he writes: "He [i.e. Theophrastus] used the *aporai* . . . as a means of clarifying and defending this position [i.e. Aristotle's] . . . Theophrastus could have been doing nothing more than trying to make Aristotle's thought clearer."

Simplicius (*CT in Ph.* 788.36 Diels = 75 Wehrli = 31 Sharples = 151B FHS&G) also testifies that Strato is arguing (*aitiasamenos*) against Aristotle:

But Strato of Lampsacus criticized the definition of time given by Aristotle and his colleagues, although he was himself a pupil of Theophrastus, who followed Aristotle on almost everything, and followed a newer path. For he does not accept that time is the number of change, because a number is a discrete quantity, process and time are continuous, but the continuous is not denumerable. But if, since there are different parts to a process, some earlier and some later, there is for this reason some number of process, then length should have a number in the same way, for here too there are different quantities; similarly in other continuous processes there is a before and an after, so that there would be a time of time for time. Moreover, there is no coming to be and passing away in number, even if numerable things pass away, but time continuously comes to be and passes away. Further, all the parts of a number must necessarily exist—for there could not be a triad without three integers. But this is impossible in the case of time, for the earlier and the later will have to exist simultaneously. Again, an integer and a now will be the same thing if time is a number, since time is composed of nows and a number of integers (translation by Urmson–Siorvanes, *Simplicius: Corollaries on Place and Time*, 108–9).

In addition to the definition of time as the measure of movement and rest, as reported by Sextus, the “controversy” between Aristotle and Strato centered on the notion of time as number, with which Aristotle deals in chapter 11 of *Physics* 4. Unlike Theophrastus and other disciples who followed the Aristotelian doctrine almost blindly, Strato argues that the time/number connection is ultimately senseless.<sup>22</sup> According to Sextus Empiricus *M* 10.155, Strato was of the opinion that time is indivisible, unlike space. Sextus’s information about Strato’s concept of the indivisibility of time, as we have already seen, remains very problematic, especially with reference to Simplicius’s information about Strato’s idea of the continuity of time. In spite of this difficulty, the fact that the continuity of time was a philosophical doctrine of Strato’s is demonstrated by Simplicius, who actually states that Strato criticized Aristotle for linking the concept of number to that of time. If time is continuous (*syneches*), it is quite impossible for it to be a number; according to Aristotle,<sup>23</sup> each number is a discrete and

<sup>22</sup> On this characterization of Theophrastus I agree entirely with Morison, “Did Theophrastus Reject Aristotle’s Account of Place?,” 99–100.

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle *Categories* 6.4b20–25.

determined quantity (*diorismenon poson*): it is therefore impossible for numbers to measure a continuous magnitude.

The continuous is not countable on the basis of numbers, and the fact that time is continuous means precisely that time is not countable. From the Aristotelian connection between time and number Strato derives some lucid arguments: if time is a number, “before” and “after” are situated in time and are also countable; if this were true, time would measure time, but this is an absurd conclusion. It is also impossible to ascribe generation or corruption to time, when time continuously generates and corrupts. Another text of Simplicius (*CT in Ph.* 789.33 Diels (= 76 Wehrli = 31 Sharples)) reports other objections from Strato to Aristotle’s concept of time:

Strato made many other objections to the Aristotelian account. He himself treats time as the quantitative in actions. “For,” he says, “we speak of someone being away from home, or sailing, or being on active service, or fighting a war for a long or a short time, and similarly we speak of his sitting and sleeping and doing nothing for a long or short time. In these the great quantity is a great time, the little quantity a little time. For time is the quantity in each of them. That is why some people say of the same man that he is coming slowly, others that he is coming fast, depending on how the quantity in the occasion appears to each party. For we say that that is quick in which the quantity between beginning and end is little and yet a great deal is done. The slow is the contrary, when the quantity is great but little is achieved. That is why,” he says, “there is no fast or slow in rest. For each period of rest is equal in achievement and there is neither great achievement in a little quantity nor little achievement in a great quantity. This,” he says, “is why we speak of more or less time but not of quicker or slower, but the quantity in which the action occurs is neither quicker or slower, but is greater or less, as is time. Night and day,” he says, “and months and years are not time nor parts of time, but the former are the presence of light or dark, the latter the orbits of the moon and the sun, but time is the quantity in which they occur” (translation by Urmson–Siorvanes, *Simplicius: Corollaries on Place and Time*, 109–10).

Aristotle had already clarified how time is a measure of quantity in *Physics* 4.12.221b7–23:

Since time is a measure of change, it will also be a measure of rest; after all, all rest is in time. For although anything which is in the process of change is necessarily changing, the same does not necessarily go for something that is in time, since time is not change; it is a number of change, and something at rest can be “in a number of change” just as much as something changing. The point is that if something is unchanging it does not follow that it is at rest; as I explained earlier, for a thing to be at rest, it has to be naturally

capable of change, but to have been deprived of change. Now, what it is to be in number is for the object to have some number and for the object's existence to be measured by the number in which it is. It follows that if a thing is in time, its existence will be measured by time. Time will measure a changing object in so far as it is a changing object, and an object at rest in so far as it is an object at rest; it will measure the extent of the change of the one, and the extent of the rest of the other. A changing object, then, is not measured by time just in so far as it has some quantity or other, but in so far as its change has a quantity. So anything which does not change, and does not rest either, is not in time. The point is that to be in time is to be measured by time, and time is a measure of change and rest (translation by Robin Waterfield–David Bostock, *Aristotle: Physics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 111).

Strato needs to emphasize that time is quantity (*to poson*).<sup>24</sup> This is also probably what is being reported by Sextus in *M* 10.177, where the philosopher states that “time is the measure of all motion and rest; for it is co-extensive with all moving objects when they are moving and with all immobile objects when they are motionless, and for this reason all things which exist exist in time.” Strato, consequently, “made many other objections to the Aristotelian account [i.e. of time],” emphasizing its quantitative aspect. Strato, however, believes that time is not a mere quantity but the quantity *in* things, a *quantum* in actions, such as surfing or sleeping; to say that time is faster or slower is wrong because it is absurd to ascribe speed or slowness to a given quantity: quantity can only be “more” (*pleon*) or “less” (*elatto*n).

Talking about “faster” time and “slower,” according to Strato, makes no sense, because time is a quantity, while talking about “more” or “less” time is right: “more” and “less” alone belong to quantity.<sup>25</sup> An action or movement can be “faster” (*thatton*) or “slower” (*bradytera*), while quantity is

<sup>24</sup> For a similar view on the quantitative concept of time in Boethus of Sidon, see Hans B. Gottschalk, *The Earliest Aristotelian Commentators*, in Richard Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 55–81, esp. 75.

<sup>25</sup> Regarding this issue, it is necessary to take account of a further Aristotelian passage from *Physics* 4.12.220a32–220b 5: “As we all know, time is not described as fast (*tachys*) and slow (*bradys*), but as plenty (*polys*) and little (*oligos*) (in so far as it is a number), and as long (*makros*) and short (*brachys*) (in so far as it is continuous). But it is not fast and slow. No number is fast and slow either—none of the numbers by which we number, I mean” (translation by Waterfield–Bostock, *Aristotle: Physics*, 108–9). Like Strato, Aristotle denies that time is fast and slow, but he admits that it can be plenty or little (as a number), long or short (as continuity). Aristotle says that time (which is a number) cannot be fast or slow because no number is fast or slow; for Strato, instead, time is not a number “because a number is a discrete quantity, process and time are continuous, but the continuous is not

never faster or slower: if quantity could be faster or slower, it would be just like action or movement. It is reasonable, however, to say that time can be “more” or “less” because it is neither action nor movement, but rather the quantity *in* which action takes place (*to de poson to en ho, he praxis*). Thanks to the evidence from Simplicius, we better understand Strato’s “polemics” against Aristotle. Aristotle asserts: “A changing object, then, is not measured by time just in so far as it has some quantity or other, but in so far as its change has a quantity.” So, according to Aristotle, time is not a quantity but what measures quantity, that is change or movement: this is a very different position from that of Strato. According to the latter philosopher, time is not what measures quantity but, on the contrary, it is itself the quantity involved in actions. What Strato probably has in mind here is not only this passage about time in Aristotle’s *Physics*, in which it is said that time measures quantity, but, probably, at least two other passages from *Categories*<sup>26</sup> and *Metaphysics*<sup>27</sup> where Aristotle seems to deny that time is a “real” quantity, despite which these two texts, from my point of view, remain somewhat problematic.

It is easy to understand, then, that if there ever was a real “controversy” between Strato and Aristotle, this essentially concerned the character of the measure Aristotle ascribed to time.<sup>28</sup> To return now to the crucial passage from Simplicius that was previously mentioned, a cautious attempt can be made to identify the “interlocutor” or “polemical target” the author mentions in the last part of the text. Simplicius very clearly shows that, according to Strato’s position, “we speak of more or less time but not of quicker or slower, but the quantity in which the action occurs is neither quicker or slower, but is greater or less, as is time. Night and day,” he explains, “and months and years are not time nor parts of time, but the former are the presence of light or dark, the latter the orbits of the moon and the sun, but time is the quantity in which they occur.”

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denumerable” (Simplicius *CT in Phys.* 789.3–4 Diels). Moreover, according to Strato, time is never fast or slow because neither is quantity (with which time is identified).

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle *Categories* 6.6a22–25. While in *Categories* 6.4b20–25 Aristotle argues that time, like space (*topos*), is a continuous (*syneches*) and not discrete (*diorismenon*) quantity, in this passage he says that quantity cannot occur in greater (*mallon*) or lesser (*hetton*) degree: a given time cannot be “more” than another time.

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 5.13.1020a26–32. In this passage Aristotle asserts that time is a sort (*atta*) of quantity; more specifically, he says that time is a continuous quantity, and because the movement (*kinesis*) has quantity, time has quantity too.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle *Physics* 4.12.220b22–24.



At this point we must consider three additional passages. The first two are Sextus Empiricus *M* 10.181 and 224–6:

It seems, too, that there is ascribed to the Physicists Epicurus and Democritus a conception of time such as this—“Time is a day-like and night-like phantasm” (translation by Bury, *Sextus Empiricus. Against the Physicists: Against the Ethicists*, 301).

Thus these things are “symptoms” which time accompanies—I mean day and night and hour and affections and non-affections and motions and rests. For day and night are symptoms of the surrounding air, of which day is a property due to the illumination from the sun, while night results from the privation of the illumination from the sun. And hour again, being a part either of day or of night, is a symptom of the air, like day and night. And time extends parallel to every day and every night and hour; and for this reason a day or a night is called long or short, as we pass over the time which is a property thereof. The affections, too, and non-affections are either pains or pleasures, and on this account are not substances but symptoms of those who are affected either pleasurably or painfully, and not timeless symptoms. And besides these, motion and also rest are, as we have already established, symptoms of bodies and not without time; for certainly we measure by time the quickness and slowness of motion, and the greater or less amount of rest (translation by Bury, *Sextus Empiricus. Against the Physicists: Against the Ethicists*, 321 and 323).

The third passage occurs in Epicurus’s *Letter to Herodotus* (73):

After all, it requires no additional proof but merely empirical reasoning, to see that with days, nights, and fractions thereof, and likewise with the presence and absence of feelings, and with motions and rests, we associate a certain particular accident, and that it is, conversely, as belonging to these things that we conceive that entity itself, in virtue of which we use the word “time” (translation by Anthony A. Long–David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 *Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary*, vol. 2 *Greek and Latin Texts with Notes and Bibliography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), vol. 1, 34).

Strato explicitly declares that there can be no faster or slower time, only more or less time, because it is not possible for speed or slowness to belong to quantity, which can only be more or less. Time, therefore, is not movement or action—it is in fact possible to define an action as fast or slow—but it is the quantity in which movement, rest or action occur. The immediate consequence is that day, night or the year are not “time” or “parts of time;” however, this does not mean that they do not have any relation with time, because time, once again, is the quantity in which day, night or the year occur. Even Epicurus argues that time is not



only related to movement but also to rest;<sup>29</sup> when it comes to this point, Epicurus's philosophical position is very close to that of Strato. Epicurus, however, defines time by connecting and calculating it on the basis of day and night; Strato, instead, argues not only that day and night are not time (like Epicurus), but that the calculation of time cannot be based on day or night. Epicurus maintains that time, in a way, "derives" *from* day, night, affections and so on. According to Strato, instead, time does not derive from day or night: it is rather the quantity *in* which night and day occur. Strato's view is different from that of Epicurus: Epicurus thinks that time "comes from" day and night (time is actually their "image" or "phantasm"/*phantasma*),<sup>30</sup> although—as in Strato's view—it is not identified with them; Strato, by contrast, shows that time is the quantity in which day, night, movement or rest occur.

While the crucial questions addressed in this paper are destined to remain open, on the basis of the texts it is possible to draw a cautious comparison between the different views of the two philosophers.<sup>31</sup> It is also important to bear in mind that Epicurus had founded a philosophical community in Lampsacus, Strato's city, in 310–306 BC, although Strato had already sailed off to Athens by then.<sup>32</sup> I believe that to posit a doctrinal relation between the two philosophers would not be unreasonable.

Aside from Epicurus, the privileged interlocutor of Strato's objections obviously remains Aristotle; in the light of the texts just considered, it

<sup>29</sup> On the Epicurean notion of time, see Francesco Verde, "*Rebus ab ipsis consequitur sensus*: Il tempo in Epicuro," *Elenchos* 29 (2008), 91–117.

<sup>30</sup> On this expression (and particularly its occurrence in *PHerc.* 1413), see Annick Monet, *La représentation du temps chez Epicure: lectures du P.Herc. 1413*, in Bernhard Palme (Hrsg.), *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, Wien, 22–28. Juli 2001 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 455–60.

<sup>31</sup> The philosophical divergence between Epicurus and Strato as regards the concept of time was already examined by Schmidt, "Straton-Zitate bei Damaskios," 221–2, and Elio Montanari, "Una polemica fisica in Epicuro," *Prometheus* 5 (1979), 124–36 (with reference to *Letter to Herodotus* 62); for other parallels between Strato and the Epicurean tradition, see too James Longrigg, "Elementary Physics in the Lyceum and Stoa," *Isis* 66 (1975) 211–29, esp. 226–7. It is significant that the relationship between the two philosophers continued to be thematized in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: see, therefore, Gianni Paganini, "Tra Epicuro e Strato: Bayle e l'immagine di Epicuro dal Sei al Settecento," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 33 (1978), 72–115.

<sup>32</sup> See Fritz Wehrli–Georg Wöhrlé–Leonid Zhmud, *Der Peripatos bis zum Beginn der römischen Kaiserzeit*, in Friedrich Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe, hrsg. von Helmut Holzhey, *Die Philosophie der Antike*, Band 3: *Ältere Akademie-Aristoteles-Peripatos*, 2., durchgesehene und erweiterte Auflage, hrsg. von Hellmut Flashar (Basel 2004), 493–666, esp. 604.

may be argued that a “controversy” on the definition of time actually took place between Strato and Aristotle—although I believe this should be somewhat toned down. What this suggests is that Strato of Lampsacus, against the more general background of the *translatio* of the notion of time, occupies a central place in the history of ancient physics for his critical attitude to Aristotle.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> On this point, see Baltussen, *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius: The Methodology of a Commentator*, 97–8 and 108; Furley, *Strato's Theory of Void*, 608 rightly describes Strato “as a reforming Aristotelian.”

# THE NOTION OF BEING AS ACT IN NEOPLATONISM AND ITS TRANSMISSION IN THE *TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM*

Rita Salis

## 1. *Introduction*

The problem of the origin of the concept of *actus essendi* constitutes one of the central themes in the history of ancient philosophy, and is one of the most important in the process known as *translatio studiorum*. The idea that Thomas Aquinas was the first to consider this concept has been contrasted with the idea that *actus essendi* was already present in Neoplatonism. In fact, the concept of “being” in Thomas Aquinas’s philosophy has been interpreted in many different ways over the years, especially in relation to Aristotle’s concept of being. In his book on being according to Thomas, Giovanni Ventimiglia recognizes three generations<sup>1</sup> within the historiography of Thomistic ontology. The first generation, begun by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, lasted until the end of the 1930s and maintained that the being of Thomas equated with that of Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> During the second generation, lasting from the beginning of the 1930s to the end of the 50s and whose main exponent was É. Gilson, the being of Thomas was seen as the *actus essendi*. These scholars therefore interpreted it as a completely new and original concept compared to both Aristotle’s being and the Neoplatonic school of thought, by which Thomas may have been influenced.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, the third generation—in which Thomas’s concept of

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<sup>1</sup> See Giovanni Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione: Il problema dell’essere in Tommaso d’Aquino: esse, diversum, contradictio* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), 5. The author also specifies here that in using the term “generations” he does not intend to indicate a rigid chronological-generational division, but different ways of interpreting Thomistic ontology that have developed through the years.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 7–8 and notes, refers to Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Les sens commun, la philosophie de l’être et les formules dogmatiques* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1909), 138ff., and includes in the first generation Francesco Olgiati, *L’anima di S. Tommaso: Saggio filosofico intorno alla concezione tomista* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1923), 17; Antonin D. Sertillanges, *St. Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Alcan, 1910), 1: 14–20; Gallus M. Manser, *Das Wesen des Thomismus* (Freiburg i.d.S.: St. Paulus-Druckerei, 1932), *passim*; Aimé Forest, *La structure métaphysique du concret selon saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1931), 36.

<sup>3</sup> The texts referred to by Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione*, 10ff. and notes, are: Étienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 144ff., in

being is considered to be unoriginal, having been elaborated within the world of Neoplatonism—originated at the beginning of the 1970s and persists to this day. Werner Beierwaltes and Klaus Kremer, among others, have led this most recent generation.<sup>4</sup>

However, together with Ventimiglia,<sup>5</sup> it is necessary to recognize the importance that the publication of two other works had on the assertion made by the “third generation.” These works are P. Hadot’s two volumes on *Porphyre et Victorinus*, published in 1968,<sup>6</sup> and Beierwaltes’s book entitled *Platonismus und Idealismus*, published in 1972.<sup>7</sup> In the latter’s book, the author demonstrates that the identification of God with being had been made by Plutarch and Porphyry as well as by Philo of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Victorinus and Augustine. In Hadot’s volume, together with the observation that this identification had been expressed in Neoplatonism, the definition of being as act is also traced back to the same period.

More specifically, this paper will discuss the section of Hadot’s study which appears in the appendix of the second volume, containing the text and the translation of the fragments of the anonymous commentary on

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which the scholar, diverging from the initial viewpoint which highlighted Thomas’s Aristotelianism as opposed to his Platonism (see Étienne Gilson, “Pourquoi saint Thomas a critiqué saint Augustin,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1926–27), 125), no longer identifies Thomas’s being with Aristotle’s, but with the *Old Testament* God in *Exodus* 3:14, a verse read as “I am the being,” Étienne Gilson, *Le Thomisme. Introduction à la philosophie de Saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1942), in which even the concept of the act of being is stated once again. Ventimiglia also reveals the profound influence that J. Maritain exerted on Gilson’s theory.

<sup>4</sup> Ventimiglia sees the forerunner of the new current as Cornelia J. de Vogel, “‘Ego sum qui sum’ et sa signification pour une philosophie chrétienne,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 34–35 (1960–61), 348, in which the following points are put forth: (1) the Greeks were the first to identify God with being, and this concept was unknown to Hebrews; (2) the Greeks (i.e. Plato and the Platonists, Plutarch, the second century Platonists of Asia Minor, Plotinus and the Neoplatonists) acknowledge that the perfect, eternal, intelligible and transcendent Being is divine; (3) the identification of God as being was unknown to Moses’ audience; (4) the 70, representatives of the rather syncretist society of third century Egypt, who translated the Bible from Hebrew, were most likely influenced by Greek thought when they translated the verse from *Exodus* with: *egô eimi ho ôn*. These assertions found their highest recognition in, for example, Werner Beierwaltes, “Der Kommentar zum ‘Liber de Causis’ als neuplatonisches Element in der Philosophie des Thomas von Aquin,” *Philosophische Rundschau* 2 (1963), 215; Klaus Kremer, *Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 377–78. See Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione*, 22ff. and notes, which may also be consulted for a detailed reconstruction of the debate which followed on Thomas’s being.

<sup>5</sup> See Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione*, 27ff. and notes.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1972).

Plato's *Parmenides*. The introductory essay added to the Italian translation of this section will also be considered.<sup>8</sup> It is thanks to Hadot and the exponents of Ventimiglia's "third generation" that the *communis opinio*, according to which the concept of *actus essendi* can first be found in the philosophy of Thomas, was disproved. Hadot in particular demonstrated that the notion of "act of being" originated from both the anonymous commentary to the *Parmenides* by Plato, which he attributes to Porphyry, and the *Enneads* by Plotinus. This paper will first examine the fragments of the commentary in order to show that in it may be found both the identification of God with being and the concept of being as *actus essendi*. An analysis of *Enneads* 6.8.7 will follow. This is one of the passages in the work by Plotinus which most deserves to be considered in order to verify the effective anticipation of Neoplatonism in a doctrine that has traditionally been deemed to be of Thomistic origin. Finally, of particular interest is the comparison between being as interpreted by Neoplatonism, especially by Plotinus, and act as conceived by Aristotle, unanimously recognized as its discoverer.

## 2. The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*

The commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, which Hadot ascribes to Porphyry, was written on a few palimpsest folios of an evangeliary of Bobbio, preserved in the National Library in Turin, but destroyed by fire in 1904. In 1873, Bernardino Peyron was the author of the first edition,<sup>9</sup> while the first critical edition was published in 1892 by Wilhelm Kroll.<sup>10</sup>

The first fragment probably refers to the section of the *Parmenides*<sup>11</sup> in which Plato places the hypotheses related to the One. The author attributes the notion of "One" to God,<sup>12</sup> and states that the One eliminates

<sup>8</sup> Porfirio, *Commentario al "Parmenide" di Platone*, a cura di Pierre Hadot (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> "Notizia di un antico evangelario bobbiese che in alcuni fogli palimpsesti contiene frammenti d'un greco trattato di filosofia," *Rivista di Filologia e d'Istruzione classica* 1 (1873), 53–71.

<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Kroll, "Ein neuplatonischer Parmenidescommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest," *Rheinisches Museum* 47 (1892), 599–627.

<sup>11</sup> See Plato *Parmenides* 136A–137C; Pierre Hadot, *Commentario al "Parmenide" di Platone*, a cura di Pierre Hadot, 20.

<sup>12</sup> In translating *ô theos* by "God" with a capital "G" and without the article, instead of "the god," I follow the thesis supported by Enrico Berti in relation to the god of Aristotle as opposed to that of Neoplatonism. Berti, against the widespread habit among scholars to translate *ô theos* with "God," believes that this way of rendering the Greek expression

any multiplicity and composition from God, making Him appear simple and as the origin of other things. God is ascribed infinite power (*apeiron dunamin*) and is said, due to the fact that He is neither one nor many, to be beyond not only the notion of multitude, but also that of one. Finally, the commentator claims that God is ineffable, so it will be possible “to stay in non-apprehensive apprehension and in a conception which conceives nothing.” This is the only way “to rest at the ineffable implicit notion of him.”<sup>13</sup>

The second fragment seems to refer to the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*—if One is—and also appears to allude to the part of the dialogue in which it is said that the One is neither one nor many, neither similar nor dissimilar.<sup>14</sup> The question is raised whether or not God therefore would be dissimilar to the Mind, that is to say from the second hypostasis according to the Neoplatonists. The answer given is that, as in the case of the sunset, in which the sun is neither illuminated nor darkened, but these are conditions (*pathêma*) of those on earth; or, as people sailing along the land think that it is the land which is moving when they themselves are moving, so God is neither similar nor dissimilar, because He is without relationship to the things subsequent to Him. Rather, all the things which are, since they are unlike Him, seek to attach themselves to Him, thinking that their relationships are reciprocal also to Him. God has being as something inseparable from Himself and not as an addition, because that would mean that God has being imperfectly, or rather as an addition to His own perfection. It is not God who is nothing for those who want to know Him, but we and all things which are, are nothing in relation to Him. It is for this reason that we cannot know Him, because human mind grasps the like through the like. The commentator answers the question whether or not God knows by saying that He has knowledge, but not the kind gained following ignorance; He knows by transcending (*huperechôn*) all knowledge. God’s knowledge cannot be compared to that

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brings the Aristotelian god closer to the God of monotheistic religions. The result is then a confusion of the kind of causality of Aristotle’s unmoved mover with a creationist or Neoplatonic concept of divinity (see Enrico Berti, “Ancora sulla causalità del motore immobile,” *Methexis* 20 (2007), 26–28). My choice of translating *ô theos* with “God” in a Neoplatonic context does not indicate tacit consent with the common translation of the Greek expression, rather a choice dictated by the necessity to distinguish it from the god of Aristotle.

<sup>13</sup> Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 1.1–2 (see Gerald Bechtle, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s “Parmenides”* (Bern-Stuttgart-Wien: Haupt, 1999), 39–43.

<sup>14</sup> See Plato *Parmenides* 139B–140B; Hadot, *Commentario al “Parmenide” di Platone*, 20.

of other knowing things, because His knowledge coincides with itself, the same way an unilluminated light is not darkened, but is merely light. God is thus removed from the others, and is filled with His own unity, while the things that come into being are nothing in relation to Him.<sup>15</sup>

The third fragment is made up of the passage from the *Parmenides* which concerns the affirmation related to the first hypothesis for which the One cannot be in time,<sup>16</sup> and a brief comment.<sup>17</sup>

The fourth fragment refers to the section of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* in which the One is considered to be ineffable and unknowable.<sup>18</sup> The exegete proposes a negative theology rather than a positive theology, because—he states—the only possible knowledge of the One is similar to the knowledge possessed by those blind from birth, who can learn the difference between colors only through the description of logical symbols. They would, in fact, understand the meaning of the colors, but they would not know exactly what they are, since they cannot perceive them. In the same way, we lack a direct perception of God, so we must admit that negative theology is better than positive theology.<sup>19</sup>

The fifth fragment concerns the beginning of the second hypothesis and its subject is whether or not the One-which-is can be and not have a participation in *ousia*.<sup>20</sup> The commentator, based on the Plotinian interpretation of the *Parmenides* which finds a hypostasis for every hypothesis,<sup>21</sup> establishes a correspondence between the second hypothesis of the Platonic dialogue (if One is) and Plotinus's second hypostasis: that-which-is (the Second One). Since the Second One is *ousia* and therefore should not participate in it, the problem arises as to how the Second One can participate in *ousia*.<sup>22</sup> The exegete proposes two solutions based on the two different meanings of "participation," that is the Platonic meaning of "take part in," which implies the relationship between two forms, and the typically Neoplatonic meaning of "to receive a transcendent Form." The commentator's first explanation attempts to avoid the absurd consequence which derives from the affirmation that the One participates in *ousia*,

<sup>15</sup> See Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 2.3–6.

<sup>16</sup> See Plato *Parmenides* 141A–D.

<sup>17</sup> See Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 3.7–8.

<sup>18</sup> See Plato *Parmenides* 141D–142A.

<sup>19</sup> See Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 4.9–10; Hadot, *Commentario al "Parmenide" di Platone*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> See Plato *Parmenides* 142B.

<sup>21</sup> See Plotinus *Enneads* 6.6.1.1ff.

<sup>22</sup> See Hadot, *Commentario al "Parmenide" di Platone*, 44.

namely that the *ousia* must preexist the One. The same way in which, if in the definition of “man” one takes “animal” and says that it participated in “reasonable,” the conclusion would be that man is “reasonable animal” as a whole, since “reasonable” has changed with “animal” and, vice versa, the One has changed with substance and substance has changed with the One, imitating the simplicity of the One that is only One, which converts into the Being. Consequently, that-which-is, is the all that is composed of unity and essence.<sup>23</sup>

The necessity of the second explanation, which refers to intelligible substances, derives from the fact that the first does not explain the essence that is added to the One.<sup>24</sup> The commentator says that, since the Second One, that is the One-being, was due to the First, that is the pure One, and the Second One is that-which-is, we must hypothesize that the First One is, in connection with the Second, the pure Being, and in virtue of its participation the Second One is also that-which-is.<sup>25</sup> Therefore the Second One that participates in the *ousia* is not simply matter that assumes form, but receives a transcendent *ousia*.<sup>26</sup> But how can the Second One receive an *ousia*, given that there is no *ousia* before it, since the First One is not being, nor substance, nor action?<sup>27</sup> The answer is found in the following lines:

But consider whether Plato does not seem to be talking in riddles, since the One that is beyond substance and beyond that-which-is, is on the one hand not that-which-is nor substance nor act (*oude energheia*), but on the other hand rather acts (*energhei de mallon*); the acting also is itself pure (*auto to energhein katharon*), so that the being itself, which is before that-which-is, is also [pure]. Participating in this, the other One has from it an extracted being, which means to participate in that-which-is.<sup>28</sup>

This passage states that the One that is beyond substance and beyond that-which-is,<sup>29</sup> that is the First One, is therefore not substance, nor being, and not even act, but He himself *acts*, since his *ousia* (i.e. his being) consists in the pure act. The assertion that the First One is not act and the

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 5.11–12.

<sup>26</sup> See Hadot, *Commentario al “Parmenide” di Platone*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> See Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, 5.12.23; Hadot, *Commentario al “Parmenide” di Platone*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 5.12.22–29 (see Bechtel, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s “Parmenides,”* 61–62).

<sup>29</sup> See Plato *Republic* 509B.



statement that He acts both clearly indicate that his activity is not something added to his *ousia*, but that his essence coincides with actuality. The First One is not substance, but he has the substance as act, the “pure act of being.”<sup>30</sup> He will therefore be *ousia* in his own way, that is his being is pure act. It is thus impossible not to agree with Hadot when he says that being constitutes the highest and purest act,<sup>31</sup> and therefore that the concept of *actus essendi* is already present in the anonymous commentary to the *Parmenides*.

The sixth and last fragment concerns the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, which reads as follows:

Then what about this? If by reflection we take unity itself, which we say has a share of being, just alone by itself, without that of which we say it has a share, will it appear to be only one, or will that very thing appear many as well? One, I should think.<sup>32</sup>

In this passage, it is Plato's intention to separate, through a mental operation, and take the One-which-is alone, and consider it by itself. In this way, the One-which-is is considered separately from the One, in which the former participates, since it is considered independently from the many that were implied by his relationship with the Being.<sup>33</sup> Hadot explains that for a Neoplatonic commentator a similar argument raises the problem of how to consider the One taken separately from the One-which-is. The scholar believes that, in order to solve the problem, one must start at the end of the fragment, where the One is described as *to auto touto, this itself*. The author of the commentary says that *this itself* is different from “himself.” On the one hand, he is one and simple, on the other, since it is different from himself, it is no longer simple. Consequently, it is one and simple in its first form, that is according to the form of *this itself* considered alone. Nevertheless, when he becomes existence, life and thought, he is no longer one nor simple. So the answer Plato gives to this problem is that, if the One is considered by itself, separately from the Being, he is one and simple. On the other hand, if he participates in the Being, he is many.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Hadot, *Commentario al “Parmenide” di Platone*, 45.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 47f., where Hadot supposes that the origin of this doctrine can be found in the Plotinian treatise on the freedom and will of the One (see Plotinus *Enneads* 6.8.4.28).

<sup>32</sup> Plato *Parmenides* 143A (see Reginald E. Allen, *Plato's Parmenides*, Translation and Analysis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 24.

<sup>33</sup> See Maurizio Migliori, *Dialettica e Verità: Commentario filosofico al “Parmenide” di Platone* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1990), 230–31.

<sup>34</sup> See Hadot, *Commentario al “Parmenide” di Platone*, 22–23.

However, since according to the commentator the One-which-is coincides with the Mind, the distinction made by Plato corresponds to two states of the Mind. Considered in itself, the Mind is absolutely simple:<sup>35</sup> “it is neither at rest nor in motion, neither the same nor different, neither in itself nor in another.”<sup>36</sup> In this way, it is identified with the One in its first form. Considered in its second state, the Mind “is at rest and is in motion at the same time, is in itself and in another, is a whole and has parts, and is the same and is different,”<sup>37</sup> so it is act on the level of life, thought and existence.<sup>38</sup> Thus life, existence and thought are acts that characterize the state in which the Mind emerges from its purity in order to become concrete.

### 3. *The actus essendi in Plotinus*

One of the passages that most deserves examination with regard to the concept of *actus essendi* is the conclusion of *Enneads* 6.8.7, in which Plotinus states:

Where—since we must use such words—the essential act (*energheia*) is identical with the being (*hupostasis*)—and this identity must obtain in the Good since it holds even in the Intellectual-Principle—there the act is no more determined by the being (*kata to einai*) than the being by the act (*kata tēn energheian*). Thus “acting according to its nature” does not apply; the act, the life, so to speak, cannot be held to issue from the being; the being accompanies the act in an eternal association: from the two (being and act) it forms itself into the Good, self-springing and unspringing.<sup>39</sup>

At the beginning of this passage it is asserted that, regarding the One, existence identifies itself with act, which is true also of the Intellectual-Principle. Plotinus, in fact, had just established that both being and act coincide in Intellectual-Principle. The Neoplatonic philosopher arrived at this conclusion by raising the questions as to whether or not Intellectual-Principle possesses independence and freedom—in an act which cannot

<sup>35</sup> See Porphyrius *In Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 6.14. 30–31.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.14.31–34 (see Bechtel, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's "Parmenides,"* 65).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.14.25–29 (see Bechtel, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's "Parmenides,"* 65).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.13–14.

<sup>39</sup> Plotinus *Enneads* 6.8.7.46–54 (see Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, abridged with an Introduction and notes by John Dillon (London: Penguin books, 1991), 520).

remain unreacted—and whether or not free will can be attributed to higher beings in general. Plotinus's reasoning is as follows: since act, he argues, will be performed without reason, but is always determined by an external need,<sup>40</sup> if higher beings obey their own nature, how can there be freedom? Yet if, on the other hand, they do not obey an extern, how can they be called slaves? How could that which pursues the Good be subject to constraint, given that the movement occurs spontaneously only if it knows to direct itself towards the Good *qua* Good? Plotinus, in fact, intends “involuntary” as a deviation from the Good, since that which deviates from the attainment of the Good and approaches something more powerful than itself, becomes a slave of that which is more powerful. Being a slave of one's own nature implies a duality—master and mastered. Now, Plotinus wonders, how is it possible that a simplex activity, which cannot have any difference of potentiality and act, is not free? It is not even possible to think “action according to the nature,” in the sense of any distinction between the being and its efficiency. Where act is performed neither because of anything else, nor depends on anything else, then surely there is freedom. Intellectual-Principle cannot depend on anything else, nor act according to anything else, because it is the principle. If Intellectual-Principle, Plotinus concludes, has a different principle, it is not outside of, but within the Good, and this makes it all the more free, given that everyone searches for freedom for the sake of the Good.<sup>41</sup>

The conclusion of the seventh section of *Enneads* 6.8 again concerns the freedom of Intellectual-Principle, and starts by referring to that which was established in *Enneads* 6.8.5, that is that the soul also is free, not for itself, but because it strives towards the Good through Intellectual-Principle. Instead, Intellectual-Principle, according to Plotinus, is free in itself, because its operation (*ergon*) is not applied to anything else, but coincides with Intellectual-Principle itself: “at rest in its good,” states Plotinus, “it is without need, complete, and may be said to live to its will”.<sup>42</sup> Now, what Plotinus said with regard to Intellectual-Principle—that in its act and existence coincide—is true also for the One, that is for the Good. In section seven, Plotinus claims that it is absurd to think that the One-Good is not free because it generates according to its nature, since that would be like claiming that it is free only if and when it generates or acts against

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<sup>40</sup> See Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1.1110a2.

<sup>41</sup> See Plotinus *Enneads* 6.8.4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.8.6.35–36 (see Plotinus *The Enneads*, 518).

nature. The uniqueness of a being does not take away its freedom—a unique being would not be free if this uniqueness derived from something outside of it, or rather from an obstacle, while it is free if its uniqueness is identified with its same essence. Therefore, it is free for the fact that it is good and has no need to move towards something else. Whoever tries to reach the Good as something else would be, in virtue of that thing, deprived of freedom.<sup>43</sup> This established, Plotinus's argument continues without specifying any subject, but also without there being any reason to think that the author is not referring to the One-Good. Plotinus writes that, since, just as occurs with Intellectual-Principle, its existence is the same as its action (*autou*), if we say that "it acts in accordance with its being" this is no better than saying "it is in accordance with its act." The meaning of Plotinus's argument is that, since existence and act are identified with the One, saying that the One acts in consonance with its being is the same as saying that it is in accordance with its acting. Therefore, act is the being of the One.

The identity in the One of act and being is repeated in the final part of the passage. Plotinus asserts that the One does not possess an activity in accordance with its nature. Its activity, that is its life, was in fact born together with (*sunegenomenê*) its essence from eternity. The One generates itself starting from its being and its own activity, and it belongs only to itself. In the One, therefore, act is given by being, and the generating act that the One carries out for itself is made by starting from being and act, that is from its own existence and its own activity. Just as, according to fragment five of the anonymous commentary to the *Parmenides*, activity does not add itself to and does not issue from the One, but coincides with its same being. Both passages thus constitute well-founded proof of the fact that the concept of *actus essendi*, which according to the traditional interpretation was first introduced by Thomas of Aquinas, was actually already present in Neoplatonic thought, in, for example, Plotinus and the commentator of the *Parmenides*.

#### 4. Plotinus and Aristotle

The fact that Plotinus posits the act as being of the One raises the question as to what kind of relationship exists between this idea of act and that

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<sup>43</sup> See Plotinus *Enneads* 6. 8.7.36–46.

of Aristotle, who was the first to introduce the concept. Scholars widely attribute this discovery to the Stagirite, even Hans J. Krämer, who stressed Aristotle's dependence on Plato. Krämer claimed that before Aristotle there existed only a *Vorgeschichte* of the doctrine of potency and actuality, in which potency was identified as a mathematical concept emerging from Plato's unwritten doctrines, and a concept of *teleion*, developed by Speusippus, who, differently from Aristotle, gave priority to the seed and not the plant, thus assigning priority to potency.<sup>44</sup> Aristotle's concept of "act" is expressed in the terms *energheia* and *entelecheia*, which recur throughout most of the *Metaphysics*. The two terms, however, were not always used with the same meaning, and Berti has shown that this does not necessarily indicate a chronological evolution, but rather a logical-conceptual transition in which Berti distinguishes three main lines, identifiable within the concepts of act as motion, as being and as activity.<sup>45</sup>

The concept of act as motion appears in Book 9 of the *Metaphysics* with the concept of potency, considered in relation to motion—that is with the concept of potency as source of change in another thing or in the thing itself *qua* other. Aristotle introduces the concept of act in order to answer the Megarians who believed in the existence of potency only when there is actuality. Aristotle asserts that it was decided to use the term *energheia* with a particular meaning, which therefore derives from a convention, that is with the meaning of *entelecheia*, and this meaning can also be attributed to other things different from motions. The Stagirite nonetheless makes this declaration in order to point out that this meaning derives from the more common one of motion. Thus, two distinct meanings of the term *energheia* emerge: one is more common, more primitive and primary, and therefore means motion, whereas the other meaning is later and derives from a linguistic convention according to which *energheia* equals *entelecheia* and means "being" or "being in action."<sup>46</sup> Berti observes that the interest in the original meaning of *energheia* lies in its expressing a strong way of being, a being seen as acting and being acted upon, that is a dynamic concept of being, and that this definition of *energheia*

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<sup>44</sup> See Enrico Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," in Enrico Berti, *Aristotele. Dalla dialettica alla filosofia prima* (Milano: Bompiani, 2004), 552; Hans J. Krämer, "Das Verhältnis von Plato und Aristoteles in neuer Sicht," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 26 (1972), 342–43.

<sup>45</sup> See Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 553–54.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 555–56.

establishes the transition to the later definition, that is to say that of "being," corresponding to the technical concept of *entelecheia*.<sup>47</sup>

Aristotle deals with *energheia* as *entelecheia* in the sixth chapter of Book 9 of the *Metaphysics*. Here it is said that "Actuality (*energheia*) means the existence of the thing (*to huparchein to pragma*), not in the sense that we mean by potency."<sup>48</sup> Berti underlines the importance of the passage for the fact that, although it does not contain a definition, since it refers to the notion of potency, which in Aristotle's thinking presupposes that of act,<sup>49</sup> it does allude to a way of existing that is not only a determination, but rather is a real being. According to Berti, the missing definition of the act confirms the fact that the potency-act pair is seen as a distinction between two basic definitions of being, that is as coextensive with the whole being, since being cannot fit into any definition, which would constitute a limitation.<sup>50</sup>

Aristotle's act therefore expresses an existence and, nonetheless, like Berti, it should be recognized that this is not enough to identify this concept with Thomas's concept of *actus essendi*. Act also has many meanings, since "every act is always a determinate act, that is it means a determinate existence."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, act and potency are the meanings of being that are predicated of all the categories,<sup>52</sup> which also constitute other meanings of being, and therefore of existence.<sup>53</sup> The doctrine of the many meanings of being forced Aristotle to reject the admission of an entity which has being as its essence—what will be called in Scholasticism *Esse ipsum subsistens*. As Berti rightly pointed out, Aristotle did not ignore the concept of *actus essendi*, but conscientiously rejected it, since it was irreconcilable with his doctrine of the many meanings of being.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>48</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 9.6.1048a30–32.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8.1049b12–14.

<sup>50</sup> See Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 559–61.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>52</sup> See Aristotle *Metaphysics* 5.7.1017b2; Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 564.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 5.7.1017a23–24; 8.2.1042b25–28; Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 564.

<sup>54</sup> See Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 565. According to Aristotle, this concept of act corresponds to substance or form, i.e., to the essence or first substance of everything (see Aristotle *Metaphysics* 7.7.1032b1–2). With regard to this, Berti observed that Aristotle's identification of act with substance has been incorrectly contrasted with the identification of act with existence acknowledged by Avicenna and Thomas, who derived from the Bible the concept of God as *actus essendi*. While Aristotle views the substance identified with act as a substance which actually exists, essence for Avicenna and Thomas is a substance by potency, purely thought. According to Berti,

The final and most significant instance in the development of the Aristotelian concept of act is found in the doctrine of the unmoved mover contained in the second part of Book 12 of the *Metaphysics*. The existence of Aristotle's god as pure act and thinking in itself is demonstrated also on the basis of his doctrine of potency and act, seen as substance, that is as being. In chapter six, indeed, it is shown that the eternity of motion necessitates not only a mover that moves eternally without ever moving itself, but also a cause that is eternally in action since, if it were not so, the movement could cease at any time. The mover must therefore be absolutely immovable, eternal, completely without potency and immaterial, since matter is potency. The actuality of the first cause, nonetheless, is not linked to motion, rather to its being, because the necessary condition for the eternity of motion is that its substance be act.

Such an act, however, cannot be *actus essendi*, since Aristotle does not allow an entity that has only the being as its essence. The act of Aristotle's unmoved mover cannot be what he defines in the *De anima* as "first act," a simple possession of knowledge. This meaning of act indeed comes before in the generation of the individual, but in relation to the substance, it comes after the "second act," which even though in the generation follows the possession, is more important because it constitutes the realization, that is the activity.<sup>55</sup> The activity that belongs to the god can only be of the most perfect kind, and such is thought. Thus, the unmoved mover is thought. But according to Aristotle thought is not just being, but also life. The act of thought is in fact defined as life,<sup>56</sup> and the life of the god is ceaseless and eternal.<sup>57</sup> Thought, therefore, is of course being, but it is the being of the most perfect entity, not just of being.<sup>58</sup>

If it is beyond doubt that it was Aristotle who first considered act, it is just as sure that Aristotle never conceived of an *actus essendi*, but only of an act of a certain activity like moving, living and thinking. This clearly distinguishes his concept of act from the one that can be found in Neoplatonism, which, on the other hand, acknowledges act as an act of being.

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this would be proved by the fact that the form with which Aristotle identifies the basic meaning of substance, that is the first substance, is not a universal form, existing only in thought, but an individual form, existing in act (see Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 562–63).

<sup>55</sup> See Aristotle *On the Soul* 2.1. 412a22ff. This fact was pointed out in Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 566–67.

<sup>56</sup> See Aristotle *Metaphysics* 12.7.1072b26–27.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1072b29–30.

<sup>58</sup> See Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella Metafisica di Aristotele," 568–69.





PART TWO

MEDIEVAL *TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM*



## TRANSLATIO TEXTUUM

Claudio Leonardi

The transmission of texts is not equivalent to the transmission of studies, but the *translatio textuum* does coincide with the *translatio studiorum*. I will rely here on the history of the two research facilities I had the privilege of directing until recently, namely the *Fondazione Ezio Franceschini* and the *Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino*, which are both located in Florence at the Certosa del Galluzzo. The names of these institutes tell you that my work has been devoted to the Middle Ages. During the last thirty years, they have both carried out wide-ranging research projects by means of, first, constituting databases regarding the bibliography, codicology, and description of the manuscripts, second, establishing authority and files on medieval authors (creating a critical list of more than 18,000 authors), and third, reviewing manuscripts on single authors or particular subjects.

I would like to start from a peculiar event, a change of civilization that apparently took place without any transmission of texts or any *translatio studiorum*. The event is the entry of the Germanic nations into the territories of the Roman Empire. They began to enter quite early, but were initially contained at the borders and were even used by the Romans. It was only during the sixth century that they took the place of the Romans in political governance. Kingdoms were formed that were led by the Germans, the so-called Roman-Barbarian reigns. At the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great tried in vain to react to the Germanic hegemony by defining himself as *episcopus Longobardorum*. The seventh and part of the eighth centuries were a period without books, in which civilization nonetheless continued to evolve. Book production certainly decreased drastically, but Pierre Riché has shown that the classical school did not disappear in the Germanic territories: some texts remained, there was simply no change. Germanic culture was first and foremost an oral culture. Its highest value was neither faith, as it was for Christians, nor rhetoric, as it was for the pagans. It was instead the blood-tie, the tie of the clan. In this civilization, the *litteratus* was kept at the margin. *Litteratus* means someone who knows letters—in practice, someone who knows Latin. Only those who did not have or could not exercise political

power could be *litterati*: monks, priests, and women. Lombard custom thus allowed the daughters of the great families to be taught Latin, but not the sons, who had instead to train themselves in arms, in the arts of war, which lay at the basis of political leadership. Even Charlemagne, the new Emperor of the West, was an *illitteratus*. It is true he kept a Latin grammar under his pillow, but he got tired right away when he tried to read it, and he put it aside.

The case of the Germanics seems unique to me in the West, for it was essentially bound to an oral culture. That makes it a different case, say, from the destruction of specific texts like the ones ordered by Savonarola at the end of the fifteenth century or during the 1930s by the Nazis. And it is also different from the impossibility of circulating certain texts in the USSR or of getting news and texts from the USSR to the West, which called for the remedies of mimeographed texts and clandestine transmissions. To say nothing of the impossibility of taking the Bible into certain Islamic territories, even today. All these, and many other events that tell us a lot about the meaning assigned to the written word among the most diverse cultural institutions, are still quite different from the “obscuratization” of texts during the early Middle Ages.

A repertory of all codices written in the early medieval centuries (more precisely, written in Western Latin) from fourth-century first exemplars of codices to the year 800 is available: the *Codices Latini antiquiores* by Elias Avery Lowe, which has been completed by Bernhard Bischoff. It assembles a very small number of codices. If we compare this number with those of the repertory of codices produced in Carolingian writing during the ninth century, which is now being edited by Bischoff, we must speak of a multitude of manuscripts, of a new civilization that was started at Charlemagne’s behest. Charlemagne had entrusted Alcuin—a great scholar indeed—with the task of establishing at the imperial court an academy of talented scholars and had initiated a state education policy that included the foundation of schools attached to the great monasteries and great bishop’s sees, and the corresponding cathedral chapters all over the empire. These were endowed, in a very short time, with a cohort of teachers. This policy definitively ended the primacy of Germanic oral culture, which by that time had already become rather weak.

What codices were being produced? What schools needed texts? Ninth-century text production was substantial. It was assumed, until not long ago, that it was classic pagan culture that prompted the Carolingian Renaissance. And it was also assumed that during the centuries of Germanic hegemony, many classical texts had remained in Ireland—the sole

country in the West in which abbots were also bishops. With their pilgrim voyages to the continent, Irish monks were said to have ignited the new culture by providing the nourishment of ancient pagan culture.

In truth, apart from a few pagan authors, Irish culture was fed by a large number of Christian authors—as Gustavo Vinay has shown, thus undermining the Irish myth. The Christian contribution has usually been underestimated. Francesco Stella has proved that the sources of Carolingian poetry also included Virgil, but first and foremost comprised late antique poetry. Carolingian libraries were full of Bibles, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Jerome, Prudentius, Boethius, and the legends of the martyrs. The repertories of the manuscripts of biblical exegesis in the catalogue of Friedrich Stegmüller, the Vienna Academy's catalogue of the codices of Augustine, and the catalogue of the codices *circa* Gregory the Great, list more than 8,000 manuscript texts (edited by the *Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino*), and not only for the Carolingian epoch. If it is true that Augustine can be considered as the heir of Platonism, and hence of the pagan tradition, he can also be said to be the father of the West for his having founded and described in accordance with Christianity human consciousness and the human being's individual personality in the cosmos—just think of the *Confessiones*. Platonic heritage is less obvious in Gregory the Great. However, it was Gregory's work, with its unsurpassed presence in all—one really can say that—medieval libraries, that in the centuries that followed transmitted the language of Augustine, side-by-side with the language of Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite, who was translated many times in the Carolingian epoch. Together with the Bible, the language of these authors permeates all early medieval culture. It is exposed to substantial semantic variations: how to translate *fas* and *nefas* from a pagan and from a Christian text? And after Augustine, how to translate *peccatum* from a pagan text?

The objective of the Carolingian school was not merely instruction in general, but also and perhaps mostly a more correct usage of a Latin that was closer to the classical. This explains the return of the classical grammarians, Donatus and Priscianus, and of the classical poets, especially outside schools, for the sake of learning meter. The catalogue of the manuscripts of pagan writers, from the Carolingian epoch to the twelfth century, edited by Birger Munk Olsen, documents at any rate the presence—certainly non-marginal, but secondary—of the pagan tradition. Just think, to name one, of Anselm of Canterbury, who lived between the eleventh and the twelfth century, whose use of arguments not only for proving God's existence, but even—in the *Cur Deus homo*—to show the

appropriateness of God's incarnation as man, does not seem to be based solely on pagan authors.

In the timespan between the eleventh and the twelfth century, another *translatio* appears to have taken place, though a different one, as it is based on juridical texts. I am not thinking here of Roman Law, which, due to the new political structures of the West, was gradually replacing Germanic Law, Carolingian capitularies, and feudal rights—the return to the Justinian Code enabled lawmaking to free itself from the empiricism of the many German *nationes* (and their derivations) and to adopt forms of more explicit universal value. I refer instead to the transformations in canon law, which had already begun to constitute itself in late antiquity by collecting into corpora passages from theological works, decisions of the councils and of individual bishops, first and foremost the bishop of Rome.

Well-known examples are the collections of the sixth century and the work of Dionysius the Small (Dionysius Exiguus). The *translatio* proper occurs however between the eleventh and the twelfth century. The eleventh century witnessed a change in the position of the Roman Church, which was no longer seen as the spiritual office first of the empire of Constantine and Theodosius and later that of the German kings and eventually the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, who had the right to appoint bishops and abbots and who also maintained a strong influence over the election of the bishop of Rome. The so-called reformation of Gregory VII set the papacy, as unique sacral office, in opposition to the empire and forced the empire to become secular, while achieving freedom for the papacy from secular power. It was from this point that the relative interdependence of the two powers began to shape the West into a civilization, in which political and ecclesiastical powers adopted different roles, even though political power could still tend toward tyranny and ecclesiastical power toward theocracy. In this context, new and diverse canonic collections were constituted, which were mostly aimed not so much at governing relations among the faithful and the church authority or among the various hierarchic degrees of the clergy, but rather at establishing the effectiveness of the power of the Roman pontiff, defending his autonomy from the political power, his *libertas*; and eventually his ability to rule over all minor ecclesiastical powers—from metropolitans to bishops, and cathedral chapters to individual vicars. In the wake of Gabriel La Bras, Ovidio Capitani has defined this *translatio* as a publicistic interpretation in the definition of ecclesiastical institutions.

Owing to theological motives, this new condition of the Church, which was bound to acquire an unprecedented historical identity and a role in social life, brought with it a set of consequences. When Aristotle's writings on physics began to penetrate the West by means of translations from Arabic and Greek, the Church of Rome was able to accept this new aspect of Aristotelian thought (with certain reservations, obviously), because his doctrine had no bearing on faith, only on history. The Scholastics, especially Thomas Aquinas, could therefore refer to Aristotle for the elaboration of a new concept of state, which was not guided by faith, but by reason together with the *consuetudines*, which history has brought about in a certain territory. We may term this epoch the Christian Athens, in which the heritage of Gregory VII achieved its fullest meaning. The figure for Aquinas's manuscripts documents the impact of his thought, even if, as Bruno Nardi has shown, schools of theology throughout Christendom were dominated as early as the fourteenth century by Franciscan theology, which conceded almost nothing to the autonomy of reason. Notwithstanding Aquinas's immense value and great success, John Duns Scotus already dominated a form of voluntarism that was wholly centered on God's will and that left no room for human reason or will. The seeds are certainly here of one of the issues that would shatter the equilibrium of the Middle Ages and open up a longing for a new culture and a new civilization: Humanism, i.e., the validation of the human being.

Pagan mythology has continuously played a role in Western culture, especially among the poets. John Scotus Eriugena called it simply a set of *fabulae*. A certain contrast between pagan and Christian culture continued until the twelfth century, even if—as the great Arnaldo Momigliano has noted—the hegemony of Christian culture was already apparent in the fourth century. Mythology transferred itself into the new genre of hagiography. The legends and the lives of the saints were the transposition of mythological tales. Hagiography arose among Christian communities as early as the third century, but it was to explode during the ninth century, when the extinction of the Carolingian dynasty brought about the formation of national political structures as well as local communities, especially in France and in Germany: communities that in Italy a few centuries later were to become the *comuni*.

In those years, each community strove for an identity of its own, which it found in the martyr, whom tradition wanted to have died in that very place, or in the bishop, who had defended the town at the time of the Germanic migrations, or which was simply invented under some

hagiographic pretext. No hagiographic geography has been constituted as yet: the *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina* presents many thousands of lives that were transmitted by means of an uncertain number of manuscripts. Not even the *Bibliotheca* provides chronological or topographical indexes that permit further details. These texts had mostly liturgical intentions and usages, although they often have a strong literary value too. The transmission of the legends occurred in certain contexts by means of collections that were ordered according to the liturgical calendar, or to geographical zoning or other criteria. The thirteenth century also saw the production of concise sets of legends, which were of use especially to Dominican and Franciscan friars for the *exempla* required by the rules of homiletical rhetoric. The masterpiece of this genre, still during the thirteenth century, is the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine, which has been transmitted through around a thousand exemplars, as we can verify in Barbara Fleith's catalogue. The development of individual Romance and Germanic languages was followed by the large-scale translation of hagiographic texts into the vernacular. There is a repertory for the Germanic world, while the *Fondazione Ezio Franceschini*, in collaboration with the *École Française de Rome*, has published the *Biblioteca agiografica italiana* in two large volumes.

With Humanism, we have already moved beyond the Middle Ages. Humanism flourished in polemical opposition to the school, for the latter was dominated by Franciscan voluntarism and late Scholastic subtleties. From the late fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth century—at least in Italy (reflecting the limited scope of my research)—one can detect a number of phenomena of lively *anti-translatio*. The school continued to use Aristotle for centuries, especially the *Organon*, but also the *Physica* and the *Metaphysica*. Italian libraries are full of manuscripts—usually on paper and of very little value—that were either lecture transcripts by professors or collections of *reportationes* by students.



## TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM THROUGH PHILOSOPHICAL TERMINOLOGY

Giacinta Spinosa

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first I want to clarify some points regarding the idea of *translatio studiorum*.<sup>1</sup> In the second I want to develop the theme indicated in the title, claiming that *translatio studiorum* can also be seen in the changes in the philosophical terminology of medieval Greek-Latin translations.

### 1. *The Idea of Translatio Studiorum*

The idea of *translatio studiorum*, or the idea of cultural translation and transmission, originated in the medieval period in the context of the *translatio imperii* that took form in the ninth century, with Charlemagne's translation of the Roman Empire from the Byzantine East to the Latin West (and the previous translation from West to East in 476 CE). Charlemagne and his historians, particularly Alcuin<sup>2</sup> and later Notker Balbulus

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<sup>1</sup> During the last decade there has been renewed interest in the subject of a historiographical kind, as a means of studying long-term changes: see Joël Biard and Roshdi Rashed (eds.), *Descartes et le moyen âge* (Paris: Vrin, 1997); Stephen F. Brown (ed.), *Meeting of the Minds: The Relation between Medieval and Classical Modern European Philosophy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); Costantino Esposito and Pasquale Porro (eds.), *Heidegger e i medievali* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); Frank La Brasca-Alfredo Perifano (eds.), *La transmission des savoirs au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2005), 2 vols.; Charles Burnett, José Meirinhos, and Jacqueline Hamesse (eds.), *Continuities and Disruptions between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Louvain-la-Neuve: FIDEM, 2008); Laura H. Hollengreen (ed.), *Translatio or the Transmission of Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Modes and Messages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); see also Édouard Jauneau, *Translatio studii=Transmission of Learning* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> See Alcuin's letter to Charlemagne in 799: "As many have responded to the famous appeal you made to devote themselves to study, perhaps a new, or even better, Athens could be created in France" ("Si, plurimis inclitum vestrae intentionis studium sequentibus, forsitan Athenae novae perficeretur in Francia, immo multo excellentior"), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolarum Tomus IV* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 279. On this, see also Aurelio Roncaglia, *Le origini*, in Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno (eds.), *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Milano: Garzanti, 1965), 87–98.

and Otto of Freising,<sup>3</sup> saw the Carolingian reform as the opportunity to retrieve texts of ancient Greek and Latin culture (mainly, however, in a grammatical sense), a retrieval that was essentially carried out through a Christian and ecclesiastic filter. The historical concept of *translatio imperii*, or the translation of power, involved a series of tensions between the Carolingian Empire and the Empire of the East, between the power of the Empire and that of the papacy.<sup>4</sup> But we should note that already the idea of *translatio imperii*, or translation of power, was understood in the larger sense of *translatio studiorum*, of a cultural translation and transmission that involves grafting a patrimony of knowledge onto a different cultural context. This happened before the ninth century. I refer to the early sixth century, between the late antique and early medieval periods in Italy, and I refer particularly to the great philosopher, theologian and Latin politician Severinus Boethius.<sup>5</sup> His words indicate that the expression *imperium transtulere*, transferring power, takes on the fuller meaning of cultural transmission, effected in a series of transitions. It is highly significant that this intellectual of Latin culture regarded transmitting the values (*prisca . . . virtus*) of ancient Greek civilization (*Graecae sapientiae*) as an essential part of his political activity, a vital part in the transmission of which was his program of translating Aristotle, starting from the work on logic.<sup>6</sup> He had the foresight to underline that Roman culture had

<sup>3</sup> See Notkerus Balbulus, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatori*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptores rerum germanicarum, nova series, tomus XII (Berlin: Weidmann, 1959) 3: "whose doctrine [Alcuin's] produced so many fruits that the Gauls or French equalled the ancient Romans and Athenians" ("Cuius [Albini scilicet Alcuini] in tantum doctrina fructificavit, ut moderni Galli sive Franci antiquis Romanis et Ateniensibus aequaretur"). See also Gregorio Piaia, *Vestigia philosophorum: Il medioevo e la storiografia filosofica* (Rimini: Maggioli, 1983), 135–42.

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'occident médiéval* (Paris: Arthaud, 1965), 218–21.

<sup>5</sup> See Massimiliano Vitiello, *Il principe, il filosofo, il guerriero* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 105–12.

<sup>6</sup> See Boethius, *In Categorias Aristotelis*, liber II, prol., PL 64, 201B: "Even though the cares of our consular office prevent us from devoting all our *otium* and all our activities to these studies, it nevertheless seems that instructing the citizenry in the doctrine of a subject that has been fully pondered is relevant to care for public affairs. Nor will I be worthless in the eyes of my citizens if I have arranged the customs of our civilization in accordance with the arts of Greek wisdom, once the ancient virtue of the men of other cities has transferred its *imperium* and its rule to this republic" ("Et si nos curae officii consularis impediunt quo minus in his studiis omne otium plenamque operam consumimus, pertinere tamen videtur hoc ad aliquam reipublicae curam, elecubratae rei doctrina cives instruere. Nec male de civibus meis merear, si cum prisca hominum virtus urbium caeterarum ad hanc unam rempublicam, dominationem, imperiumque transtulerit, ego id saltem quod reliquum est, Graecae sapientiae artibus mores nostrae civitatis instruxero").

always had the merit of acquiring what was best in other peoples. And this is one of the fundamental drives at the basis of *translatio studiorum*: knowing how to absorb and reelaborate what was inherited from other civilizations, honoring it by imitating it (*imitatione honestare*).<sup>7</sup> *Translatio studiorum* also involves—again in Boethius’s words—detailed commentary and clarification of the writings of the ancient masters of philosophy (*veteres philosophiae duces*), which have come down to us wrapped in obscurity (*profunda mersas caligine*) as a result of the length of time that has gone by. Acquiring them meant preparing a series of introductions and abstracts, both summing up what had been said too elaborately, and elaborating what had been said too succinctly. Work on the vocabulary was also necessary to this end—according to Boethius, who is rightly considered the father of medieval philosophical terminology. This meant clarifying improperly coined neologisms by returning to words more commonly used.<sup>8</sup>

We can see, then, how the wealth of intrinsic implications in the historical concept of *translatio imperii* corresponds to the many senses of *translatio studiorum* at a cultural level. Indeed, it involves the relationship that every civilization has had with the ancient, a dialectical relationship of continuity and discontinuity, loyalty and renewal, conservation and progress. The Greek world already considered itself late compared to its “archaic” predecessors (see Aristotle, *Metaphysica*),<sup>9</sup> while Latin antiquity regarded the Greek philosophers as “antique.”<sup>10</sup> During the Middle Ages the dichotomy *ancients/moderns* took on articulate forms. Marie-Dominique Chenu has shown that it did not refer only to pagan antiquity compared with Christian modernity, but that this semantic pair indicated

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.: “And so this does not lie outside a consul’s duties, as it has always been the custom of the Romans more and more to honour with imitation what was beautiful and praiseworthy in every kind of peoples” (“Quare ne hoc quidem ipsum consulis vacat officio, cum Romani semper fuerit moris quod ubicunque gentium pulchrum esset atque laudabile, id magis ac magis imitatione honestare”).

<sup>8</sup> See Boethius, *Introductio ad syllogismos categoricos*, Prol., PL 64, 761C. See too the similar passage, Boethius, *De syllogismo categorico*, liber primus, PL 64, 793C–794D.

<sup>9</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1.3.983b27–984a5; 14.2.1088b35–1089a6; 14.4.1091a 33–b15.

<sup>10</sup> For the expression “antiqui philosophi” with reference to the Greek philosophers, see Cicero, *Lucullus*, XXIII; *De natura deorum*, liber I, §. XXVIII; *Tusculanae disputationes*, liber V, §§. IV, XII; *De divinatione*, liber I, §. III; see too the expression “Graeci quidem antiquiores,” in Cicero, *De re publica*, liber II, §. X; and also the many places in Cicero in which “antiqui” refers to the Greek philosophers: see Cicero, *De inventione*, liber I, §. V; *De officiis*, liber II, §. II; *Academici libri*, liber I, §§. II, VI; *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, liber I, §. II; liber IV, §§. IV, VIII, XXIII; liber V, §§. V, VIII, XXV; *Tusculanae disputationes*, liber I, §§. I, XVII; liber III, §. XVIII; liber V, §§. IV, XII; *De divinatione*, liber I, §. XXXIX.

variously the gap existing between patristics and scholasticism, or more purely philosophical-doctrinal distinctions, for example, those between the supporters of *logica vetus* rather than *logica nova*, or the supporters of the realist *via antiqua*, rather than the nominalist *via moderna* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

The well-known medieval image of dwarves sitting on the shoulders of giants can be traced to a similar model. It is an extremely effective image, but its simplicity lends itself to various interpretations. This is how it sounds in the mid-twelfth century in the words of John of Salisbury (*Metalogicon*, 1159), who attributes it to Bernard of Chartres:

We are as dwarves seated on the shoulders of giants, that we may see more and further than they do, not because we are sharp-sighted or physically distinguished, but because the size of the giants raises us higher.<sup>12</sup>

This image was to be very popular in the Middle Ages and later, and would be read by many modern historians as a formulation *avant la lettre* of the well-known seventeenth-century *querelle des anciens et des modernes*. To

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<sup>11</sup> See Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Notes de lexicographie philosophique médiévale. Antiqui, moderni," in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Studi di lessicografia filosofica medievale*, ed. and with an introductory essay by Giacinta Spinosa (Firenze: Olschki, 2001) CI, 69–81. On this subject see Albert Zimmermann (ed.), *Antiqui und Moderni: Traditionsbewusstsein und Fortschrittsbewusstsein im späten Mittelalter* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); Elisabeth Gössmann, *Antiqui und Moderni im Mittelalter: Eine geschichtliche Standortbestimmung* (München-Wien: Schöningh, 1974); Brian Stock, "Antiqui and Moderni as Giants and Dwarfs: A Reflection of Popular Culture?," *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 76 (1978–79), 370–4; William J. Courtenay, "Antiqui and Moderni in Late Medieval Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), 3–10; Alessandro Ghisalberti, *Via antiqua e via moderna dal Tardo Medioevo al Rinascimento*, in Giuseppe Rocco (ed.), *Platonismo e aristotelismo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia (secc. XIV–XVI)* (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 1989), 23–38; Marc Fumaroli, *La querelle des anciens et des modernes: 17.–18. siècles, précédé de Les abeilles et les araignées; suivi d'une postface de Jean-Robert Armogathe*, éd. établie et annotée par Anne-Marie Lecoq (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); Stephen Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Speculum. A Journal of Medieval Studies*, 78 (2003), 1150–83; Tullio Gregory, "Nani sulle spalle dei giganti: Traduzioni e ritorno degli Antichi nel medioevo latino," *Studi medievali* 44 (2003), 1053–1075; Mireille Ausécache, *Les Géants et les nains: Antiqui et moderni chez Gilles de Corbeil*, in Monique Goullet (ed.), *Parva pro magnis muneris, études de littérature tardo-antique et médiévale offertes à François Dolbeau par ses élèves* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 761–788.

<sup>12</sup> Iohannes Saresberiensis, *Metalogicon*, J. B. Hall (ed.) (Turnhout: Brepols (CCCM, 98), 1991) III, 4, 116: "Bernard of Chartres used to say we were almost like dwarves seated on the shoulders of giants, so that we could see more and further, not because of the sharpness of our vision, or the eminence of our bodies, but because we are raised higher and lifted up thanks to the size of the giants" ("Dicebat Bernardus Carnotensis nos esse quasi nanos gigantum umeris insidentes, ut possimus plura eis et remotiora uidere, non utique proprii uisus acumine, aut eminentia corporis, sed quia in altum subuehimur et extollimur magnitudine gigantea").

a greater or lesser degree this is the position of Émile Brehier, Joseph De Ghellinck, Eugenio Garin, Jaques Le Goff, Rodolfo Mondolfo, Paul Renucci, Franco Simone, Cesare Vasoli and Ernst Curtius. Understood in this sense, the image means that the moderns may be dwarves, but being seated on the shoulders of those giants who were the ancients, they see further than them. Some suggest that this contains the idea of the superiority of the moderns over the ancients, to which we might add the idea of *translatio studiorum* as transforming and surpassing, cultural progress. This would mean attributing to the medievals of the twelfth century an intentionality and historical awareness which some have doubted. In his careful reconstruction of the medieval diffusion of this image Édouard Jeuneau reinstated the question in the historical-doctrinal context of authors like John of Salisbury, William of Conches and Pierre de Blois, referring to their shared rhetorical and logical-grammatical approach.<sup>13</sup> If we go back to the textual *loci* where this comparison was used, the need for greater interpretative caution will become clearer. Thus in John of Salisbury we find the claim that antiquity deserved greater veneration (*venerabilior est vetustas*).<sup>14</sup> William of Conches is moving in the same direction when he writes (*Glosses on Priscian*) that the moderns may be more discerning (*perspicaciores*) than the ancients, but they are not wiser (*sapientiores*) than them.<sup>15</sup> This is linked to what was the original source of the image of dwarves on the shoulders of giants, which was also a recurrent element in many of the reprises of the image. I refer to Priscian's phrase, commented by William of Conches, to the effect that: "the more recent the authors of grammar are, the more they are discerning" (*Auctores cuius, grammaticae, quanto iuniores, posteriores, tanto perspicaciores*).<sup>16</sup> The excellence of the moderns is in their visual "discernment," then, due to their elevated position, and not in their intrinsic greatness. Indeed, William of Conches states: "we [moderns] see more than the ancients but we do not know more than them" (*"Et ita plura perspicimus il<lis sed> non plu<ra sci>mus"*).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the dwarf sees further not because of his greatness,

<sup>13</sup> See Édouard Jeuneau, "Nani gigantum humeris insidentes. Essai d'interprétation de Bernard de Chartres," *Vivarium* 5 (1967), 79–99, now in Édouard Jeuneau, *Nani sulle spalle dei giganti* (Napoli: Guida, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> See Iohannes Saresberiensis, *Metalogicon*, III, 4, 116, cit. in Jeuneau, *Nani sulle spalle dei giganti*, 43–44.

<sup>15</sup> See Guillelmus de Conchis, *Glossae super Priscianum* (first draft) Ms. Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, San Marco 310, fol. 1v–2r, cit. in Jeuneau, *Nani sulle spalle dei giganti*, 46.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

but because of the greatness of the giant; in the same way the moderns see more than the ancients because their own modest writings are added to their predecessors' great works; it is not due to their own great intelligence but to the work of others. The second version of the *Glosses on Priscian* is still more explicit, observing that Priscian does not say "more learned" but "more discerning" ("non dicit doctiores sed perspicaciores").<sup>18</sup> There is also the claim that the ancients were much better than the moderns ("antiqui multo meliores fuerunt modernis"),<sup>19</sup> a claim once again to be understood in the context of the liberal arts.

To understand the position of these masters towards the ancient world, I think it may be useful to consider the principle of respect for authorities (*auctoritates*), both ancient and more recent, which dominated the medieval mentality and gave rise to the commentaries. On that basis we will be able to see in the attitude of these twelfth-century medievals a receptiveness towards the excellence of the moderns, however much it may be tempered by veneration for the ancients. Indeed, the moderns can at least enjoy the experience of those coming after and as a result see more than those who preceded them: *veritas filia temporis*.

Discussion of the concept of *auctoritas* leads to another aspect of *translatio studiorum* that connected to the judgment of agreeing or disagreeing with the doctrines to transpose and hand down. It happens in the history of medieval philosophy and theology that the *auctoritates* to be saved sometimes disagree with each other, or the moderns disagree with those they want to be handed down. In this case *translatio studiorum* happens through a special procedure that twelfth and thirteenth-century medieval theologians defined technically as *exponere reverenter*. This meant expounding and commenting with respect the discordant opinions of the Fathers, trying to mediate between them, safeguarding the venerability and honor of the authoritative figures (*auctoritates*) who supported them. In this case too we can turn to the studies of Marie-Dominique Chenu,<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See Guillelmus de Conchis, *Glossae super Priscianum* (second draft), Ms. Paris, BN Lat. 15130, fol. 2ra, cit. in Jeaneau, *Nani sulle spalle dei giganti*, 47.

<sup>19</sup> See Guillelmus de Conchis, *Glossae super Macrobiūm*, Ms. Copenhagen, Biblioteca Reale, Gl. Kgl. S. 1910, 4<sup>o</sup> fol. 122r, cit. in Jeaneau, *Nani sulle spalle dei giganti*, 48.

<sup>20</sup> See Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montréal-Paris: Vrin, 1950), 121–25; Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1976 (1957<sup>e</sup>), 360–65; Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Authentica et Magistralia." Deux lieux théologiques au XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Divus Thomas* 28 (1925), 257–85 (now in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Studi di lessicografia filosofica medievale*, 1–29: 20–29); Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Maître Thomas est-il une autorité? Note sur deux lieux théologiques



who recalls Abelard's *Sic et non* as an emblematic text of the conflict between authorities and the method for resolving it. Not only do the opinions of authorities appear in conflict when removed from their context, but often their utterances are ambiguous, incomplete and imprecise. In the second half of the twelfth century Alan of Lille said ironically: "authority has a wax nose, that is, it can be bent in different directions" ("Auctoritas habet cereum nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum").<sup>21</sup> Abelard's rule (*Sic et non*, Prol.) is to examine the polysemia of the terms and to consider that authors sometimes seem to disagree because they use the same words with different meanings—which will prove useful later in this paper, in the second part on the development of philosophical terminology. Abelard also urges us to evaluate differences of style, literary genre and historical context. Thomas Aquinas took a similar view later: faced with the disagreements of the Fathers, the *antiqui doctores*, he urged the moderns not to reject their positions, but to interpret them reverently.<sup>22</sup> Here too we find the already seen couple of ancients/moderns, the latter preparing to discreetly perfect the claims of the ancients.

The caution and subtle nuances that can be found in interpreting the famous image of the dwarves and giants and the concept of authority are emblematic of the caution that should be adopted in dealing with the connected theme of *translatio studiorum*. One transfers and hands down something one admires and venerates, something one regards as worth preserving, and perhaps superior, and yet in the inevitable work of transformation that is implicit in any retrieval we can see the capacity,

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au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue thomiste* 8 (1925), 187–94; 187 (now in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Studi di lessicografia filosofica medievale*, 31–38: 31).

<sup>21</sup> Alanus ab Insulis, *De fide catholica*, I, 30, PL 210, 333A, in Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle*, 361.

<sup>22</sup> Thoma de Aquino, *Contra errores Graecorum*, Prol., ed. Romae: ad Sanctae Sabinae (Sancti Thomae de Aquino *Opera Omnia* iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita, XL), 171: "And so, if we find in the sayings of the ancient doctors things said without all the caution observed by the moderns, these things are not to be condemned or rejected; nor should they be amplified, but interpreted reverently" ("Unde si qua in dictis antiquorum doctorum inveniuntur quae cum tanta cautela non dicantur quanta a modernis servatur, non sunt contemnenda au abicienda; sed nec etiam ea extendere oportet, sed exponere reverenter") (cit. in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle*, 365, n. 2). On this medieval hermeneutics see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 181, 347–50. See too the recent contribution by Pietro B. Rossi, "Diligenter notare, pie intelligere, reverenter exponere: i teologi medievali lettori e fruitori dei Padri," in Maria-rosa Cortesi (ed.), *Leggere i Padri tra passato e presente. Continuità delle memorie e supporti digitali*, Cremona, November 21–22, 2008 (Firenze: SISMEL, 2010), 39–64.

originality and critical detachment of those performing the work of retrieval and transmission.

In the history of medieval philosophical-theological thought there was also another type of *translatio studiorum*, which started from an attitude of superiority towards the precious knowledge that was to be handed down. This is the so-called “sacred theft” and the so-called *reductio artium ad sacram scripturam*, or bringing the pagan liberal arts back to the study of the Christian sacred Scriptures. This type of *translatio studiorum* implies a subordinate conception of the classical and pagan culture of the seven liberal arts of the Trivium and Quadrivium—that came together in medieval encyclopedism—which is recovered as *sapientia inferior*, preliminary to the superior Christian knowledge. It had a functional use, then, in the knowledge to be handed down, occupying a lower place in the hierarchy than the new of the Christian revelation. This attitude was typical of authors ranging from Augustine to Cassiodorus, from Hugh of St. Victor to Bonaventure, and involved suspicion of the *vana curiositas* underlying knowledge in the ancient world. Connected to this conception of cultural transmission is the comparison to the already cited “sacred theft” perpetrated by the Jews fleeing from Egypt (*Exodus* 12, 35). They took with them the Egyptians’ golden vessels, or the treasures of ancient wisdom, according to Augustine’s interpretation.<sup>23</sup>

All these preliminary considerations seem to me a good way into the central theme of this paper, which is to look at *translatio studiorum* through the philosophical terminology of the medieval Greek-Latin translations. It should, however, first be made clear what the link is between philosophical terminology and “intellectual history.” The link is evident in a passage which is almost a manifesto for the “History of ideas,” the antecedent of present-day “intellectual history.” I refer to Arthur O. Lovejoy’s reflections in 1936: in his later classic work *The Great Chain of Being* he asserted that an essential part of the interdisciplinary approach—which has characterized these studies to this day—is “philosophical semantics,” that is to say, “a study of the sacred words and phrases of a period or a

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<sup>23</sup> See Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana*, 2, 39–40. For authors who already discussed this subject see Tullio Gregory, *La reductio artium da Cassiodoro a S. Bonaventura* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1956) (also in Bruno Nardi (ed.), *Il pensiero pedagogico del medioevo* (Firenze: Coedizioni Giuntine Sansoni, 1956); Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: De Boccard, 1958) 393, n. 2, which refers to Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa; see too *ibid.*, the whole of part II, 159–327.



movement." In fact, revealing linguistic ambiguities helps reconstruct the sometimes surprising paths that ideas take, which prove to be driven by words understood as "forces in history."<sup>24</sup> We are not talking, of course, about eternal ideas and metahistorical and unchanging problems, floating above the concrete lives of men; we are talking about concepts and problems that are always new, born out of historically different contexts, which are now expressed through ancient words—equal only in form but not in meaning—and now through new words.

Studying the linguistic and semantic development of philosophical terminology from Greek and Latin antiquity to the medieval West and down to the first modern age of the seventeenth century—with the permanence of Latin as the language of the *république des lettres*—enables us to follow one of the many forms by which *translatio studiorum* historically worked, by a series of graftings of one culture onto another. In addition, if it is true that *translatio studiorum* happens through continual dialogue with the ancients, it is also true that this dialogue takes place firstly through written texts, sometimes through uninterrupted transmission, but more often through a laborious work of retrieval. A crucial element in the retrieval of ancient texts, sometimes belonging to a different linguistic civilization, is translation, which is a decisive element in the semantic development of words.

Some mention, at least, must be given to that epoch-making cultural transference of Greek classical and Hellenistic culture through Arab mediation. It returned to the West in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, enriched and developed, with a cultural grafting that was also a geographic and linguistic translation from East to West.<sup>25</sup> In this way the Arabs acquired the legacy of classical Greek philosophy and protected it, translating it into Syriac and Arabic, during the late-antique and early-medieval crisis of the Latin West. Thanks to Arab mediation, the Latin West then performed a new *translatio studiorum* in the other geographical direction, bringing back the Greek legacy to the West with the Arabic and Syriac-Latin translations. Alert medieval figures were aware of this. In 1200, for example, Roger Bacon observed: "Aristotle's book with a

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<sup>24</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge-Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), 14.

<sup>25</sup> See the conference on *Translatio studiorum. Averroes, Averroism, Anti-Averroism*, XIVth Annual Symposium de la Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale (SIEPM), Geneva, October 4–6, 2006.

commentary was translated from Greek into Arabic, and from Arabic to Latin" ("liber Aristotelis cum eius Commentario translatus est de Greco in Arabicum et de eo in latinum").<sup>26</sup>

The medieval translations from Greek—which I am interested in here and which were a more substantial acquisition of texts than those from Arabic—are outstandingly a form of *translatio studiorum*. They go through a series of successive impulses, each different from the others. The primary impulse that translation started from was to preserve and transmit knowledge from one culture to another. In the case of philosophy it was a question of transmitting the treasures of ancient philosophical and scientific thought, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy in particular. But in the primary impulse of conservation various transformations are implicit, the first of which is due to translation and its techniques. Every translation is a reappropriation of a text—Greek in this case—in the terms, structures and linguistic codes of another language, Latin. A translation may emphasize the original language—as happened in the Middle Ages—or the target language—as would happen in the Renaissance. The diversity of semantic calques, transliterations or adaptations, the coinage of neologisms or semantic changes to preexisting terms, indicates the plurality of choices available to the translator in his work of transposing a philosophical or scientific text from Greek into Latin. But translation is only the first step of *translatio studiorum*. The next step is no longer marked by acquisition, but by transformation and reappropriation within new historical and cultural contexts. It is a rethinking of the philosophical-scientific content that entails a profound transformation: medieval philosophy was born, and it is no accident that it has been described as a continual commentary on the work of Plato and Aristotle. Yet it is a commentary that generates new content, if only because of the fertile meeting of Christian thought and the ancient world.

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<sup>26</sup> Rogeri Baconis *Operis Maioris Pars Septima seu Moralis Philosophia* (Zürich: Thesaurus Mundi, 1953) 267. See too the well-known comments on the translations: Rogerus Baco, *Opus maius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), I, pars II, 54–56; pars III, 66ff.

## 2. *Some Examples of Translatio Studiorum in Medieval and Modern Philosophical Terminology*

### 2.1. *Subalternatio, impassibilitas*

In the second part of this paper I want to illustrate some examples of the history and semantic variation of philosophical terms in the Greek-Latin translations, which I shall present classified according to some typologies of cultural transmission. The first group of examples refers to *translatio studiorum* from Greek and pagan antiquity to the Latin and Christian Middle Ages: the first example is from Aristotle, the second from Stoic and Neoplatonic thought. They are of particular interest in that they are two Latin neologisms from the medieval period: *subalternatio*, subordination, and *impassibilitas*, impassiveness.

The term *subalternatio*, subordination, has a dual value, one from rhetoric, the other from logic and epistemology. In the rhetorical sense it witnesses the transition from ancient rhetoric, where the Greek term ὑπallαγή means “hypallage,” “inversion,” to high-medieval theology of the ninth century. It is used by the great Latin theologian John Scotus—the author of the Greek-Latin version of the Pseudo-Dionysius—to explain an apparent contradiction in Augustine of Hippo’s conception of predestination. The contradiction can be overcome if we perform a *subalternatio*, a reduction, of the concept of predestination to that of divine prescience of the salvation of the elect.<sup>27</sup>

The second, logical-epistemological meaning of the term *subalternatio* has a longer history, and is linked to the notions of *scientia subalternans* and *scientia subalternata*, or the notions of superordinate science and subordinate science. This case of cultural transmission involves a series of translations: from Greek to Latin, from Aristotle to medieval scholasticism, and from logic to theology. In his *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle had theorized the existence of a link of subordination between sciences with the same object. If the superior science investigates the cause, the why of something, the science subordinate to it can indicate only the how, the way in which that phenomenon happens. Aristotle’s examples are eloquent: optics should be regarded as a subordinate science to geometry, just as music is subordinate to arithmetic. In other words, geometry

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Iohannes Scotus, *De divina praedestinatione liber* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978) chap. 15, 6, 90.

and arithmetic are superordinate sciences as they provide the theoretical principles whose practical application is demonstrated by optics and music.<sup>28</sup>

Aristotle's logical-epistemological theory was to be used by the medievals as frame and theoretical support for a central problem in the thirteenth century: that of examining whether theology can be regarded as a science or not. This transition happened first in the medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's *Analytica posteriora*.<sup>29</sup> One logical outcome was that starting from Boethius and leading to Peter Hispanus, who theorized particular negative and positive propositions as subordinate to universal negative and positive propositions;<sup>30</sup> while Boethius of Dacia in his Commentary on the *Topics* theorized the syllogistic demonstration *per subalternationem*.<sup>31</sup> Later, many prologues to Commentaries on the *Sentences* and *Summae* included a preliminary examination of the notion of *subalternatio*, before answering the question whether theology is a science, *utrum theologia sit scientia*. Thomas Aquinas's solution to the problem was to consider theology as a science, but subordinate to a superior and superordinate science, *scientia divina*, divine science. That meant that theology might be considered a science in that it derives its principles from the articles of faith of divine science.<sup>32</sup>

A particularly significant case of the concept of *subalternatio* is to be found in the work of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, who in the mid thirteenth century attributed both meanings to the term, that of "inversion," typical of ancient rhetoric, and Aristotle's logical sense of subordination. In this case too there is a cultural translation, because both ancient meanings were acquired and shifted into a medieval theological con-

<sup>28</sup> See Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora*, I, 7, 9, 13, 28.

<sup>29</sup> See Robertus Grosseteste, *Commentarius in Posteriorum analyticorum libros* (Firenze: Olschki, 1981) 138ff., 148ff., 188ff., 260ff.; see also Amos Corbini, *La teoria della scienza nel XIII secolo: I Commenti agli Analitici secondi* (Firenze: SISMELE—Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> See Boethius, *Introductio ad syllogismos categoricos*, PL 64, 773B; Petrus Hispanensis, *Summulae logicae*, I, 13.

<sup>31</sup> See Boethii Daci *Quaestiones super librum Topicorum*, in *Opera* (Hauniae: apud Librarium G.E.C. Gad, 1976) VI, I, 52.

<sup>32</sup> See Sancti Thomae de Aquino *Expositio libri posteriorum*, in *Opera omnia* (Romae: Commissio Leonina-Paris: Vrin), T. I, 2, ed. alt. retract., 1989, I, 21, 77; I, 25, 91–92; I, 41, 151; S. Thomae Aquinatis *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, I, prol., q. 1, a. 3, quaestiu. 3, sol. 2 (Paris: Lethieilleux, 1929) I, 13; Sancti Thomae de Aquino *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 89; Sancti Thomae de Aquino *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, in *Opera omnia*, T. 22, II (Romae: ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1972) q. 14, a. 9, 3, 462; q. 14, a. 9, resp., ad tertium, 464; q. 15, a. 2, resp. ad quartum decimum, ad quintum decimum, 489.

text.<sup>33</sup> Bonaventure's tempting theory is that theology's relation to Holy Scripture requires an exchange, sliding from the narrative and symbolic method of the Biblical commentaries, to the rational and heuristic one of the *Sentences*. Hence the superordinate science is the superior science of holy Scripture, which rests on authority, while the subordinate science is theology, in that it is the rational science of the *Sentences*.<sup>34</sup>

The second example of cultural translation from pagan antiquity to the Christian Middle Ages is that concerning the Christian neologism *impassibilitas*, impassiveness. The Latin term can be found from the late-antique period onwards in Jerome and Augustine, and then appears in the High Middle Ages in John Scotus and in the thirteenth century in Bonaventure, Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquinas. *Impassibilitas*, impassiveness, is not only a translation of the Greek term ἀπάθεια but is a genuine example of cultural transmission and transformation in the transition from paganism to Christianity. Even before becoming typical of the stoic sage, ἀπάθεια had been for Aristotle a characteristic of the separate intellect<sup>35</sup> and so of the "impassive and unalterable" God, imparting motion but unmoving, and thought of thought, theorized in Book XII of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>36</sup> If Aristotle had already regarded the ethical virtues as states of apathy and calm compared with pleasures and pains,<sup>37</sup> it was Stoicism that defined the figure of the sage whose ἀπάθεια consisted in detachment from the passions and worldly goods that do not depend on us. This was in a framework of stoic ethics that urged imperturbability and indifference to events that are governed by fate,<sup>38</sup> while the other great Hellenistic current, Epicureanism, had situated impassiveness mainly in the physical world, attributing it sometimes to nature,<sup>39</sup> sometimes to atoms,<sup>40</sup> or even to states of apathy connected with the weather.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See Bonaventura, *Commentaria in quattuor libros Sententiarum*, Proemium (1250–54), cit. in Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La théologie comme science au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), 53–57.

<sup>34</sup> See Bonaventura, *Commentaria in quattuor libros Sententiarum*, 1, Proemium, q. 2, ad 4, in *Opera omnia* (Quaracchi: ex typis Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882), 11.

<sup>35</sup> See Aristotle, *De anima*, 430 a 18; 408 b 25, 29.

<sup>36</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1073 a 11.

<sup>37</sup> See Aristotle, *Ethica nicomachea*, 1104 b 24; *Ethica eudemia*, 1222 a 3.

<sup>38</sup> See Cicero, *De finibus*, III, 29, SVF III, 35; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) VII, 117, SVF III, 448; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, VII, 116, in connection with Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, IV, 11–13.

<sup>39</sup> See Philo, *De incorruptibilitate mundi* (Berlin: Buchdruckerei der Koenigl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1876) 227–28.

<sup>40</sup> See Hermann Usener (ed.), *Epicurea* (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1887) fr. 267, 191, 15; fr. 270, 192, 27; fr. 284, 202, 25; fr. 288, 206, 21.

<sup>41</sup> See Epicurus, *Epistola I*, in Usener (ed.), *Epicurea*, 25, 73.

When taken up by the Neoplatonists, Plotinus saw ἀπάθεια as a freeing of the soul from the bodily passions, in accordance with the principle of the superiority of the spiritual over the material, the intelligible over the sensible, and with care for the gradual ascent of the soul, which returns to its heavenly seat, once it has freed itself of the burden of the body.<sup>42</sup> There is another example of translation and Christian transformation within Greek culture with Gregorius Nissenus, one of the greatest of the late-antique Greek Fathers. Here ἀπάθεια was a quality typical of the Christian ascetic, a quality differing from its pagan equivalent by its direct reference to the figure and condition of the divinity. Thanks to ἀπάθεια the Christian ascetic can achieve the imitation of God and so resemble Him (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) (Plato, *Thaetetus*, 176 a–b; *Republic*, 6, 501 b; later taken up by Plotinus, *Enneades*, I).<sup>43</sup> The true ἀπάθης is God, and ἀπάθεια is, properly speaking, a divine quality as it represents the supernatural life.<sup>44</sup> In the Christian conception of impassiveness there is not therefore an abstention from something, not removal, but there is a straining towards a typically divine condition, that of bliss (*beatitudo*),<sup>45</sup> reached through the contemplation of spiritual things.<sup>46</sup> What we have in the end is a transition from pagan philosophy to Christian spirituality. This legacy is handed over intact in the Latin term *impassibilitas*, impassiveness, which takes

<sup>42</sup> Plotinus, *Enneades*, I, 2, 6,26; IV, 7, 13,2; III, 5, 6,10; IV, 4, 42,20–28.

<sup>43</sup> See Maïeul Cappuyns, “Le ‘De imagine’ de Grégoire de Nysse traduit par Jean Scot Érigène,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 32 (1965), 214, 232 (PG 44, 123A–256C). See too Gregorius Nyssenens, *Homiliae in Cant.*, PL 44, 777A, 857A. See too Battista Mondin, *Storia dell'antropologia filosofica: dalle origini fino a Vico* (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2001), who indicates the following studies for the concept of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ in the Greek fathers: Hubert Merki, ‘Ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, von der Platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa (Freiburg: Paulisdruckerei, 1952); Henri Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1956); Walther Volker, *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clement von Alexandria* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1952). See too Dietrich Roloff, *Gottähnlichkeit, Vergöttlichung und Erhöhung zu seligem Leben. Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der platonischen Angleichung an Gott* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970).

<sup>44</sup> See Gregorius Nyssenens, *Oratio cathechetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 64, 4 (PL 45, 48B); *Contra Eunomium*, in Gregorii Nysseni *Opera*, pars prior, liber II (= liber XII PG 45) (Leiden: Brill, 1960) 335–36 (PG 45, 1036D); *Homiliae in Cant.*, PG 44, 857A.

<sup>45</sup> See Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Aubier, 1944) 99–100. See too Gregorius Nyssenens, *De imagine*, Maïeul Cappuyns (ed.), V, 214; *De perfectione*, in Gregorii Nysseni *Opera ascetica*, Werner Jaeger (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1952) 212, 5 (PG 46, 284D); *De hominis opificio*, 5, 1, in *Opera Gregorii Nysseni*, I, 1, Georg Hay Forbes (ed.) (Burntisland: E typographeo de Pitsligo, 1855) (PG 44, 137B).

<sup>46</sup> See Gregorius Nyssenens, *Homiliae in Cant.*, PG 44, 948A.

on the values indicated and, significantly, emerges in Latin in the context of Greek-Latin translations like those of texts by Gregorius Nissenus, Maximus the Confessor and Epiphanius, translations John Scotus made and included in his original writings. It is worth noting that in the previous centuries Jerome and Augustine of Hippo were cautious about adopting this Latin neologism as a translation of the Greek ἀπάθεια.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.2. *Alteratio*

It is now time to turn to another type of *translatio studiorum* effected through the philosophical terminology of Greek-Latin translations. It involves a still longer chronological span from ancient philosophy to modern philosophy, via the Middle Ages. The term in question is *alteratio*, alteration. The long history of this idea shows the variety of uses that are possible for a single term through the changing of cultural and doctrinal contexts within which it is included. It goes without saying that in this way different concepts will be conveyed by a single term, the result of a repeated *translatio studiorum*, or a repeated cultural translation from Aristotle to Boethius, from the masters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to some of the great protagonists of modern thought, such as Giordano Bruno, Descartes and Leibniz.

In this case too the origin is Greek, and is due to Aristotle's capacity to coin new words to express new concepts.<sup>48</sup> It is a question of naming the four types of change that would be the foundation of physics for centuries, down to the seventeenth century: 1) translation, or movement proper, in place; 2) generation and corruption, or change in substance; 3) growth and diminution, or change in quantity; and finally, alteration, which, with a new term, the Greek ἀλλοίωσις, expresses change in quality. Aristotle's examples are a color more or less light, or a man more or

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<sup>47</sup> See Giacinta Spinosa, "Il lessico filosofico medievale e le sue tipologie," *Filologia mediolatina: Studies in Medieval Latin Texts and their Transmission* 13 (2006), 103–42: 122–25. On the linguistic changes that overtook Christian Latin and the Christianization of pagan values, which involve both transmission and cultural modification, see Simone Deléani, "Le latin des Pères. Un domaine encore mal exploré," in *Les Pères de l'Église, Histoire-Littérature-Théologie, "L'aventure des Sources Chrétiennes"* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 251–64; René Braun, "Tertullien et le renouvellement du latin," in *Les Pères de l'Église*, 265–74; Gilles Dorival, "La mutation chrétienne des idées et des valeurs païennes," in *Les Pères de l'Église*, 275–94.

<sup>48</sup> See Aristotle, *Physica* 5.2.226a24–b3.



less wise.<sup>49</sup> The first, multiple cultural translation, active in the transition from antiquity to the High Middle Ages, from Greek to Latin, and from physics to logic, was made by the already cited Boethius, who coined the term *alteratio*, alteration, on the threshold of the sixth century to comment on Aristotle's logic and express the distinction between alterity and alteration through the logic notion of specific difference. While alterity expresses a substantial difference and denotes objects that are wholly different, alteration expresses a difference that is only qualitative. So we can say that the notion of alteration is entailed in that of alterity, but not vice versa. Any object that is substantially other will also be altered, while the converse is not true, that any object altered in its quality is also substantially other.<sup>50</sup>

The second phase of cultural translation happened in the transition from the High Middle Ages to the mature scholastic age (twelfth–fourteenth centuries), with the spread of the term and notion of *alteratio*, alteration, in many doctrinal areas from its origins in physics and logic to psychology, metaphysics, and theology itself. These are the uses in the context of the problem of transubstantiation of the Eucharist (in Alan of Lille)<sup>51</sup> and in the central one of the distinction of the three persons of the Trinity (in Bernard of Clairvaux).<sup>52</sup> The concept's plasticity was such that it underwent a particularly varied cultural translation, extending to alchemy (in Geber),<sup>53</sup> medicine (in Urso Salernitanus)<sup>54</sup> and ethics (in Ramon Llull).<sup>55</sup>

Over the centuries *alteratio* underwent a third cultural translation, through the grafting of an ancient and medieval notion onto modern thought. In this case *alteratio*, curiously, is both polemical aim and object of retrieval through transformation. As is well known, modern philosophy

<sup>49</sup> See Aristotle, *Categoriae* 8.10b27ff.; 14.15a14. See also Robert R. Barr, "The Nature of Alteration in Aristotle," *The New Scholasticism* 30 (1956), 472–84.

<sup>50</sup> See Boethii *In Isagogen Porphyrii Commenta* (Leipzig: Freytag, 1906), *In Isagogen Porphyrii editio secunda*, 246.16; 244.18.19; 245.2.25; 246.3.

<sup>51</sup> See Alanus de Insulis, *Contra haereticos*, PL 210, 360A–C, liber I, c. 58.

<sup>52</sup> See Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, *Sermo 80*, in Sancti Bernardi *Opera*, II (Roma: Editiones Cistercienses, 1958) 281; Bernardus Claraevallensis, *De consideratione ad Eugenium papam*, in *Opera*, III (Roma: Editiones Cistercienses, 1963) 481.

<sup>53</sup> See Geber *Summa perfectionis sive perfecti magisterii* (s. XIII), 1, 13, in *Artis chemicae principes Avicenna atque Geber* (Basileae, per Petrum Pernam, 1572), 497–708; 645.

<sup>54</sup> See Urso Salernitanus, *De effectibus medicinarum*, 147, in Curt Matthaes, *Der Salernitaner Arzt Urso ...* (Leipzig: Diss., 1918), 39–53.

<sup>55</sup> See Raimundus Lullus, *Ars generalis ultima* (op. 128), pars 9, g (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986).



in the seventeenth century argued against the hidden qualities, powers and natures of scholasticism, in the name of the principles of the scientific revolution and mechanism. In spite of this, university teaching continued to impart the principles of scholastic philosophy, in which even the philosophers who proved to be most innovative towards it had been trained. This explains the retrieval of some Aristotelian notions, but also their radical transformation once they were placed in new contexts. An example is the use of *alteratio* by modern philosophers like Bruno, Descartes and Leibniz. Giordano Bruno's infinite universe is one and immobile; nevertheless, non-substantial alterations happen there that guarantee both its variety and the persistence of unity and immobility.<sup>56</sup> As for Descartes, he explains the physical phenomena of combustion and digestion through alteration—and precisely as an alternative to the hidden qualities of scholasticism. Alteration is reinterpreted in Descartes following the mechanistic model and understood as the motion of physical particles, as an alternative to hidden qualities such as the *calefactiva* and digestive powers.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the case of Leibniz makes a good conclusion to this paper of mine on *translatio studiorum*. Leibniz was the seventeenth-century philosopher who—by his own admission—more than any other was close to ancient, medieval and scholastic philosophy. He is a clear example of how new buildings can be constructed using ancient stones. Leibniz believed that ancient and medieval philosophy had much to transmit and that its concepts can usefully be reused. A famous example is that of the monads, first Pythagorean, then Platonic and Neoplatonic, then Arabic and Renaissance, cabalistic, alchemistic and finally Leibnizian. But, to remain on the theme of alteration, Leibniz uses the term—with a direct citation of the Greek ἀλλοίωσις of Aristotle—to explain the different degrees of impulses in monads. In this way he reinstated an ancient concept in the context of that dynamic conception of continuum physics which was the avant-garde of mathematics in his time.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> See Giordano Bruno, *De la causa, principio et uno*, in *Dialoghi italiani*, I, *Dialoghi metafisici* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1958), 318ff.; see too Giordano Bruno, *De l'infinito, universo et mondi*, in *Dialoghi italiani*, 425–26.

<sup>57</sup> See René Descartes, letter to Regius of 24 May 1640, in René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, III (Paris: Vrin, 1971), 63–71, particularly 67–68; see too Descartes, letter to Regius of mid-December 1641, in *Correspondence*, 461.

<sup>58</sup> See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *De ipsa natura sive de vi insita actionibusque creaturarum, pro dynamicis suis confirmandis illustrandisque*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1880), 514.



## TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM ET INSTRUMENTS DE TRAVAIL PHILOSOPHIQUES MÉDIÉVAUX À L'ÉPOQUE SCOLASTIQUE

Jacqueline Hamesse

Les traductions latines d'œuvres grecques, arabes ou hébraïques ne furent pas les seuls intermédiaires indispensables pour une *translatio studiorum* pendant l'époque médiévale et même au-delà<sup>1</sup>. Les textes nouvellement traduits qui arrivaient dans l'Occident latin connurent un succès immédiat, mais la transmission de copies suffisantes pour satisfaire aux besoins des intellectuels et des universitaires se fit progressivement et même, lorsque des copies furent disponibles, tous ne pouvaient y avoir accès pour des raisons économiques. En effet, le prix des manuscrits était élevé et même des bibliothèques riches ne pouvaient se prévaloir d'avoir à disposition toutes les œuvres dont leurs lecteurs auraient voulu prendre connaissance. Il fallait donc trouver impérativement une autre solution pour donner accès aux textes, d'autant plus que le recours aux *auctoritates* faisait partie intégrante de la méthode scolastique et qu'il était donc nécessaire de fournir le matériel nécessaire à tous ceux qui en avaient besoin.

Nous savons que dès l'Antiquité, l'utilisation de modèles plus anciens, réputés et illustres, était indispensable dans la rédaction d'œuvres littéraires et philosophiques<sup>2</sup>. Témoins directs, fidèles ou, au contraire « inauthentiques » de leurs sources, les passages ainsi transmis, étaient parfois les seuls à subsister d'une œuvre aujourd'hui disparue. Quand on aborde la question d'extraits cités comme « auctoritates », un aspect important doit être pris en considération : « la question de l'authenticité de la citation, et au-delà, la question de l'auteur auquel celle-ci serait attribuable, » points qui occupent à juste titre une place fondamentale dans les pratiques philologiques traditionnelles<sup>3</sup>. Comment citait-on, pourquoi

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<sup>1</sup> A propos de l'importance des traductions pour la *translatio studiorum*, voir la conférence inaugurale de T. Gregory dans ce volume. On pourra consulter aussi du même auteur, Tullio Gregory, *Origini della terminologia filosofica moderna. Linee di ricerca* (Firenze: Olschki, 2006); Tullio Gregory, « Translatio studiorum, » *Quaderni di storia* 70 (2009), 5–39.

<sup>2</sup> Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil 1979).

<sup>3</sup> *La citation dans l'Antiquité* (Grenoble: Millon, 2004). Dans l'article qu'elle intitule *Les citations grecques et romaines*, Catherine Darbo-Peschanski écrit aussi p. 14 : « Une partie

et pour qui? Ces interrogations restent les mêmes à l'époque médiévale et il est indispensable d'y répondre pour comprendre de manière précise le contenu et la portée de ces recueils de citations nombreux, composés et utilisés non seulement pour la philosophie, mais aussi pour les autres branches du savoir.

En effet, avec l'entrée de l'aristotélisme dans le monde latin, la philosophie allait s'enrichir de nombreux textes nouveaux présentant des doctrines différentes de celles qu'on trouvait traditionnellement chez les Pères de l'Eglise ou dans les œuvres d'inspiration néoplatoniciennes. Avant cette invasion de textes philosophiques nouveaux, les auteurs du haut moyen âge disposaient déjà d'une documentation suffisante pour y trouver les sources qu'ils voulaient exploiter et utiliser à l'appui de leurs propres doctrines grâce à la Bible, aux auteurs classiques et aux œuvres patristiques. Le néoplatonisme jouait un grand rôle à cette époque et l'augustinisme influençait la plupart des auteurs, de manière directe ou indirecte. Quant à l'aristotélisme, il n'était alors connu que par le biais des traductions de la *logica vetus* et des commentaires qui en furent réalisés par Boèce, même si les intellectuels de cette époque n'étaient pas sans savoir que d'autres ouvrages du Stagirite existaient. Ils en avaient entendu parler, mais ces textes n'étaient pas encore accessibles en latin. Les florilèges de cette époque reflètent d'ailleurs l'exploitation des auteurs mis au programme du *trivium* et du *quadrivium* dès le haut moyen âge. Pour compléter le matériel philosophique utile à connaître, on y trouve, outre une partie de la logique d'Aristote ainsi que les commentaires de Boèce, de la documentation concernant la morale extraite des œuvres de Sénèque, ainsi que ce qu'il fallait connaître à propos de la rhétorique par le biais de citations provenant des ouvrages de Cicéron. C'est dire que la bibliothèque dont les auteurs pouvaient se servir à cette époque était encore très limitée.

Lorsque les traductions latines des œuvres d'Aristote, commencèrent à arriver dans le monde latin dès le 12<sup>e</sup> siècle, véhiculant des conceptions originales très séduisantes et proposant des théories différentes dans bon nombre de domaines, des horizons nouveaux s'ouvrirent aux intellectuels. Sans abandonner le matériel qui figurait dans les florilèges philosophiques antérieurs (sauf, et ceci mérite d'être souligné, ce qui provenait des ouvrages

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de la littérature de compilation ou de commentaires... suscite d'interminables débats sur la fidélité des auteurs à l'égard de leurs sources et les réponses apportées commandent l'appréciation que l'on porte sur la nature de l'œuvre, son projet et ses méthodes. »

de Cicéron), on le compléta à l'aide d'extraits puisés dans les nouvelles traductions latines et le Stagirite devint alors très rapidement l'Autorité philosophique par excellence. La *translatio studiorum* s'enrichissait ainsi considérablement grâce à l'apport d'œuvres restées trop longtemps inaccessibles. Mais la méthode scolastique mettra beaucoup de temps à intégrer pleinement la nouveauté présentée par ces doctrines, à cause de la méfiance témoignée par les théologiens à l'égard de ces théories nouvelles dont certaines entraient en contradiction avec la doctrine chrétienne. Malgré les difficultés et les oppositions, la lecture et le commentaire de ces œuvres furent cependant inscrits très rapidement au programme des cours de la Faculté des Arts et le recours aux citations puisées dans l'aristotélisme fut de plus en plus fréquent, ce qui provoqua immédiatement des réactions vives de la part des autorités ecclésiastiques. Certaines doctrines furent condamnées et l'enseignement de différentes œuvres, jugées « dangereuses, » fut interdit dans certaines universités.

Cet enrichissement de la littérature philosophique désormais disponible ne se fit cependant pas sans poser d'énormes problèmes dans ce monde christianisé. Même l'étude des « sommes » fut défendue à la Faculté des Arts de Paris dès 1210: « Qu'on ne lise pas les livres d'Aristote *de metaphysica et de naturali philosophia*, ni même leurs condensés<sup>4</sup>. » Pourquoi interdire même les résumés? Parce que les autorités ecclésiastiques redoutaient que ces textes puissent être mal compris et interprétés erronément par des étudiants ou des clercs qui n'étaient pas encore théologiens et qui n'avaient donc pas la formation voulue pour les comprendre de manière correcte<sup>5</sup>. Les résumés, eux aussi, pouvaient être suspects parce qu'il était

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<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Denifle et Emile Chatelain, *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis*, I (Paris 1889), n° 20, 78–79: « Nullus legat Parisius de Artibus. . . Non legantur libri Aristotelis de methafisica et de naturali philosophia, nec summe de eiusdem. . . »

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Le livre des XXIV philosophes* (Grenoble: Millon, 1989), p. 65: « L'Eglise voit en effet un trop grand nombre de clercs non formés aux études théologiques s'intéresser à des idées difficiles d'Aristote et craint, que n'étant ni suffisamment avertis ni suffisamment instruits, ils n'en tirent des conséquences absurdes et ne se répandent dans les paroisses et les couvents en propos contraires à la foi. C'est pour la même raison que se voient interdits les livres théologiques en langue vulgaire, afin que n'importe qui ne puisse avoir accès aux questions de foi.

Si la foi est ainsi en cause, qu'importe la 'philosophie naturelle' d'Aristote, si l'on entend par là ses 'libri naturales,' c'est à dire ses traités de sciences naturelles qui expliquent le monde et ce qu'il contient? S'il s'agit par contre des rapports de Dieu et du monde, des existants et de l'étant, qui pourraient susciter des thèses panthéistes, il faut donner un sens plus restreint à la 'naturalis philosophia' et envisager qu'elle ne désigne que certains textes touchant Dieu. »

impossible de vérifier la compétence des compilateurs ainsi que l'orthodoxie du matériel transmis de cette manière et qui pouvait donc, d'après les théologiens, être source de problèmes et de commentaires inexacts.

A cela s'ajoutait le fait que les traductions d'une langue à l'autre présentaient d'autres dangers: des problèmes de sens pouvaient se poser et déformer dans certains cas la pensée des auteurs traduits. Le latin ne possédait pas la richesse lexicale du grec ou de l'arabe et certains concepts devaient donc être rendus soit par des néologismes, soit par des translittérations, soit par des synonymes plus ou moins adaptés, ce qui, en général, supprimait les nuances du texte original ou même pouvait induire en erreur, ce qui contribuait encore plus à la méfiance des théologiens.

Cependant ces mesures drastiques ne suffirent pas à endiguer le succès de cette philosophie nouvelle, ni l'invasion de l'aristotélisme à tous les niveaux et dans tous les milieux, présentant souvent une approche différente et séduisante des théories traditionnelles concernant surtout les questions de philosophie naturelle. Si, malgré les interdictions, la philosophie d'Aristote continua à se répandre à l'université et surtout, dans un premier temps, à la Faculté des Arts, où les autorités ecclésiastiques compétentes ne parvinrent plus à endiguer son succès, les ordres mendiants, quant à eux, très méfiants vis-à-vis de ce succès, intervinrent de manière plus drastique. Leur réaction rapide, face à ce mouvement, se voulait protecteur en cherchant à éloigner leurs jeunes frères aux études de théories séduisantes certes, mais qui pouvaient donner lieu à des interprétations qui n'étaient pas nécessairement en accord avec la doctrine chrétienne et donc semer éventuellement le doute ou le trouble dans leurs esprits.

La mise au point d'instruments de travail et de recueils de citations permit de faire face à cette difficulté et de limiter les dégâts et par voie de conséquence, la *translatio studiorum* se fit très fréquemment par leur intermédiaire. Il importe donc d'examiner ces recueils qui furent composés en grand nombre à cette époque et d'essayer d'analyser les raisons de leur succès. Pour comprendre la portée d'un phénomène tel que celui-là, il faut le resituer dans le contexte historique, intellectuel, social et économique qui l'a vu naître. En effet, depuis le haut moyen âge, la mise au point d'instruments de travail répondait, dans une certaine mesure, à une nécessité, mais permit aussi de faire en plus partiellement face aux difficultés mises en avant par les théologiens, en limitant les dégâts. En effet, les compilateurs chargés de réunir des extraits représentatifs des doctrines nouvelles, pouvaient faire des sélections dans les œuvres originales et passer sous silence des passages entiers qu'ils jugeaient problématiques.

Mais, en résumant des parties entières d'une œuvre ou en sortant des phrases de leur contexte, une censure automatique s'établissait du même coup et les problèmes d'interprétation erronée ne se posaient plus. D'ailleurs certains compilateurs n'avaient pas eux-mêmes une formation philosophique suffisante pour comprendre toutes les subtilités des raisonnements philosophiques développés dans certains passages. Mais quel était alors le crédit qu'on pouvait accorder à ces recueils de citations, pratiques certes, mais souvent décevants parce que peu représentatifs des doctrines élaborées par leur auteur ? On simplifiait les textes à outrance et on les résumait souvent le plus possible pour n'y laisser que des arguments généraux de peu d'intérêt philosophique. Les textes étaient donc expurgés d'office et privés de leur substance originale. Comme ils ne présentaient plus de dangers pour de jeunes étudiants encore peu formés, les professeurs ne craignaient plus de les mettre entre toutes les mains et permettaient, sur cette base, à ceux qui le souhaitaient de s'initier à l'aristotélisme.

La formation scolastique comprenait non seulement des explications de textes, mais aussi des sermons et des exercices de discussion. Aussi la plupart des instruments de travail mis en circulation véhiculaient-ils des *auctoritates* qui pouvaient servir tant pour les études et les exercices que pour la prédication et qui étaient utilisées par ceux qui étudiaient les arts, comme par les clercs qui devaient préparer des homélies.

Les citations mises en circulation pouvaient alors servir dans des contextes très différents, puisqu'elles s'adaptaient aisément à des développements très variés, ce qui illustre bien leur caractère général et universel. On retrouve ici la remarque faite par Alain de Lille un siècle plus tôt lorsqu'il compare les autorités à des nez de cire et montre comment des passages tirés de leur contexte peuvent être mal interprétés et s'adapter finalement à diverses théories, parfois même contradictoires<sup>6</sup>.

A cause de leur niveau scientifique assez modeste et élémentaire, on pourrait croire que ces recueils, médiévaux par définition et utiles, voire même indispensables, pour la formation scolastique, cessèrent d'être diffusés après cette époque, lorsque la culture humaniste fut apte à composer de nouveaux manuels plus élaborés. Or, il n'en fut rien. Jusqu'à la fin du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle, et dans certains cas, même au-delà, tant que la formation

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<sup>6</sup> Alanus de Insulis, *De fide catholica contra haereticos*, I 30: « Sed quia auctoritas cereum nasum habet, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est » (*Patrologia Latina*, CCX), col. 333 A.

scolastique resta en vigueur, certains de ces instruments philosophiques continuèrent non seulement à être employés, mais connurent même encore un certain succès, ce qui peut paraître étrange à première vue<sup>7</sup>.

Les instruments de travail philosophiques qui furent constitués en grand nombre pendant le 13<sup>e</sup> siècle pour répondre aux besoins de l'enseignement et de l'étude, portaient souvent des titres différents, correspondant à des objectifs divers: *auctoritates*, *sententiae*, *conclusiones*, *axiomata*, *flores* et *compendia* ne doivent pas être confondus<sup>8</sup>. Ces termes techniques du vocabulaire de la culture scolastique avaient pour but essentiel de donner à ceux qui étudiaient et devaient prendre part aux exercices imposés, les arguments nécessaires à utiliser dans les discussions. Ces citations étaient rarement littérales, mais s'apparentaient plus souvent à des paraphrases ou à des condensés de passages entiers qui constituaient des résumés tout à fait neutres de doctrines parfois très complexes. Elles se réduisaient habituellement à des phrases courtes, faciles à mémoriser et à utiliser dans des contextes divers, y compris dans des sermons puisque la prédication faisait partie des obligations tant à l'université que dans les ordres.

D'autre part, il importe aussi de déterminer le public auquel le compilateur destinait son travail. Quelle était la culture des utilisateurs? S'agissait-il de débutants ou bien d'étudiants ayant déjà un certain niveau d'érudition? Lorsqu'ils existent, les prologues de ces instruments de travail constituent une source d'information irremplaçable, expliquant la méthode suivie dans la compilation, les buts poursuivis et désignant le public auquel la documentation était destinée<sup>9</sup>. On ne résumait pas de la même manière des doctrines destinées à initier de jeunes débutants ou au contraire à des étudiants en cours de spécialisation.

Au début, ces instruments de travail, étant donné leur caractère pratique, leur accessibilité et leur utilité, vont connaître un très grand succès parmi les intellectuels de l'époque. Parmi eux, les *tabulae* et *indices* seront considérés comme des aides plus neutres destinées à fournir des autorités, mais, malgré cela, seront encore considérés par les médiévaux comme des

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse, « Du manuscrit à l'imprimé; l'évolution d'un florilège philosophique du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, » in *Ad Ingenii Acuitionem* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Brepols 2006), 127, 143.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse, « Le vocabulaire des florilèges médiévaux, » in Olga Weijers (éd.), *Méthodes et instruments du travail intellectuel au moyen âge. Etudes sur le vocabulaire* (Turnhout: Brepols 1990), 209–30.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse (éd.), *Les prologues médiévaux* (Turnhout: Brepols 2000).



instruments de travail au service d'un enseignement chrétien<sup>10</sup>. Comme l'écrivait Richard Rouse: « Dans les écoles de théologie, les *indices* et autres tables sont l'œuvre d'éléments traditionalistes et conçus à l'origine dans un dessein conservateur. Des prélats érudits comme Grosseteste et Kildwardby voyaient dans la concordance et la table des matières un moyen de pousser le plus avant possible dans la tradition chrétienne. Pour eux, l'index ne servait pas tant à consulter une quantité de livres sans cesse grandissante qu'à faciliter l'accès et à concentrer l'attention sur la somme des textes d'autorité nécessaires à la formation des prédicateurs et des théologiens<sup>11</sup>. »

Cependant, la plupart des théologiens restaient méfiants. Ils redoutaient même les traductions en langue vulgaire des textes aristotéliens, par peur de voir des versions inexactes plus difficiles à contrôler, se diffuser rapidement dans les milieux érudits. Tous ces instruments de travail, faciles à utiliser et à recopier, eurent aussi une influence très grande sur la lecture pratiquée par les intellectuels. En effet, il est toujours utile, voire indispensable, de resituer les pratiques d'une époque dans le milieu social et économique qui les a vus naître. Au 13<sup>e</sup> siècle, les *originalia*, c'est à dire les textes complets des auteurs à connaître étaient rares et chers<sup>12</sup>. Le parchemin était hors de prix pour des intellectuels pauvres. Le papier l'était tout autant et présentait en plus le désavantage d'être fragile et de boire l'encre tant que la technique de fabrication de ce matériau ne fut pas entièrement maîtrisée. A cela s'ajoutait éventuellement le coût de la copie pour la plupart des utilisateurs dont l'habileté à écrire n'était pas évidente. La copie était encore l'apanage de spécialistes formés à ce métier et était considérée comme un travail servile que certains ordres religieux interdisaient d'ailleurs à leurs frères, sous prétexte de gaspiller en copiant le temps précieux qu'ils devaient consacrer à l'étude.

Il en résulte que ceux qui lisaient les œuvres d'autrui dans leur totalité étaient rares ou privilégiés et que la plupart d'entre eux ne connaissaient les doctrines des auteurs qu'à travers des filtres divers représentés par ces instruments de travail, faciles à manier et leur donnant l'essentiel

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Philipp W. Rosemann, *Robert Grosseteste's Tabula*, in James McEvoy (ed.), *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives on his Thought and Scholarship* (Turnhout: Brepols 1995) 323–24.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Rouse, « La diffusion en occident au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle des outils de travail facilitant l'accès aux textes autoritatifs, » *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 44 (1976), 143.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Donatella Nebbiai, *L'« originale » et les « originalia » dans les bibliothèques médiévales*, in Marc Zimmermann (éd.), *Auctor et auctoritas: invention et conformisme dans l'écriture médiévale* (Paris: Droz, 2001), 487–505.

de la matière à connaître. Pendant le haut moyen âge, ceux qui lisaient avaient le temps de prendre connaissance du petit nombre de livres qu'ils avaient sous la main. Dans les monastères, ils avaient le temps de méditer en faisant leurs lectures, mais, dès le 12<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec l'accroissement de la production littéraire et scientifique, la mentalité change et la *ruminatio* des textes fait place à l'*utilitas* et à la *brevitas*, c'est-à-dire à un désir de connaître et de trouver rapidement et en bref ce qui faisait la base de la culture et des « études. »

Comme l'écrivait déjà le Père Chenu: « Toute la pédagogie médiévale est à base de lectures de textes et la scolastique universitaire institutionnalise ce travail<sup>13</sup>. » Mais de quelle lecture s'agissait-il? On constate d'ailleurs que le terme *lectio* est ambigu pendant le haut moyen âge, désignant aussi bien l'enseignement que la lecture privée, comme le fera d'ailleurs remarquer Jean de Salisbury dans son *Metalogicon*<sup>14</sup>. Il faut attendre le 13<sup>e</sup> siècle pour voir la création d'un néologisme latin *lectura*, afin de distinguer les deux réalités, *lectio* étant réservé désormais à désigner uniquement le cours, tandis que *lectura* désignera outre la lecture elle-même faite par un individu, la lecture faite par un professeur pendant le cours, comprenant les explications de textes et les commentaires<sup>15</sup>.

A l'époque scolastique, la lecture était très souvent basée sur ces instruments de travail, facile à manier, certes, et pouvant même être éventuellement recopiés à peu de frais, étant donné leur caractère condensé. Un nouveau système de connaissance se met en place, privilégiant une lecture morcelée de passages pris souvent hors de leurs contextes, mais ayant l'avantage de pouvoir être mémorisés<sup>16</sup>. La plupart des citations étaient courtes, condensées et pouvaient donc être facilement apprises par cœur. La mémoire jouait un rôle essentiel pendant toute cette période. Ce phénomène permet d'expliquer le passage d'une connaissance approfondie

<sup>13</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montréal-Paris: Publications de l'Institut d'Etudes médiévales 1954, 2e éd.), 67.

<sup>14</sup> *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Metalogicon libri IIII. Recognovit... C.C.I. Webb* (Oxonii 1919), 53-54: « Sed quia legendi verbum equivocum est, tam ad docentis quam discantis exercitium, quam ad occupationem per se scrutantis scripturas; alterum, id est quod inter doctorem et discipulum communicatur (ut verbum utamur Quintiliani) dicatur praelectio, alterum quod ad scrutinium meditantis accedit, lectio simpliciter appellatur. »

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Olga Weijers, *Terminologie des universités au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1987), 301; Mariken Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 295-96.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse, « Le modèle scolastique de la lecture, » in Guglielmo Cavallo (éd.), *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 130.

des textes qui était celle du haut moyen âge, à l'utilité qui se limite à trouver l'essentiel à connaître pour répondre aux divers besoins des études ou de la prédication. Il est vrai que, vu l'accroissement de la production littéraire et scientifique dans tous les domaines, l'ensemble des connaissances n'était plus entièrement accessible à un seul individu.

Les instruments de travail philosophiques se multiplièrent donc très rapidement. Depuis la seconde moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, les chercheurs ont pris conscience de l'importance des instruments de travail pour l'étude des textes médiévaux. Grabmann le premier avait attiré l'attention des médiévistes sur cette littérature de seconde main dès 1939 et son étude basée sur la philosophie aristotélicienne reste encore fondamentale aujourd'hui, même si à cette époque il n'avait pas pu voir toutes les implications qu'on pouvait en attendre<sup>17</sup>. Il fallut d'ailleurs aussi un certain temps avant que les médiévistes n'en mesurent l'importance et ne réalisent à quel point il était important de connaître et de consulter ces recueils pour comprendre la portée de ses recherches.

Comme de nombreux textes nouveaux n'avaient pas été rédigés en latin, mais résultaient de traductions faites sur la base du grec, de l'arabe ou de l'hébreu, il fallait aussi s'assurer que les termes techniques latins qui s'y trouvaient, pour désigner le vocabulaire de certaines disciplines, soient bien compris. Le latin était par définition la langue de culture à cette époque. Mais les intellectuels étaient en majorité des clercs dont la langue maternelle était un parler vernaculaire. Aussi, fallait-il s'assurer de donner au langage technique des équivalents permettant de saisir de manière précise le ou les sens exact(s) des concepts. Plusieurs traducteurs, conscients de ces problèmes et de la pauvreté du vocabulaire abstrait dans la langue latine, avaient d'ailleurs essayé de pallier cette difficulté en mettant dans leur traduction des explications de mots difficiles, introduites par *id est* ou *scilicet*, et suivies d'un synonyme ou d'une paraphrase afin d'en bien faire saisir le sens<sup>18</sup>. Mais certains d'entre eux n'étaient pas suffisamment initiés à la problématique exposée dans les originaux et se trouvaient face à de nombreux problèmes de compréhension ou de sens, outre les difficultés linguistiques inhérentes au passage d'une langue à l'autre.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Martin Grabmann, *Methoden und Hilfsmittel des Aristotelesstudiums im Mittelalter* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1939).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse, *La terminologie latine des traducteurs médiévaux, expression de la rencontre des cultures dans l'histoire de la pensée espagnole*, in José María Soto Rabanos (éd.), *Pensamiento medieval hispano* (Madrid: CSIC, 1988), 1459–1496.

Conscients de ces problèmes, certains médiévaux, tels Vincent de Beauvais ou Guillaume d'Auvergne par exemple, y feront allusion dans leurs écrits. C'est ainsi que pour aider les intellectuels de l'époque, de nombreux lexiques et glossaires virent le jour et devinrent des auxiliaires indispensables afin de permettre à chacun de trouver les sens exacts des termes utilisés et d'éviter des contresens. Nous en connaissons un certain nombre, mais la plupart d'entre eux restent malheureusement encore inédits et ne sont repérés qu'au hasard de la consultation ou de l'étude des manuscrits<sup>19</sup>. Il faut bien avouer que, jusqu'à récemment, la plupart des instruments de travail lexicographiques médiévaux n'ont pas été pris en considération par les chercheurs et n'ont pas reçu l'attention qu'ils méritaient, alors qu'ils furent pourtant utilisés en grand nombre par tous les scolastiques.

Avant de terminer, il est indispensable de développer encore trois points importants pour comprendre le rôle joué par les instruments de travail dans la *translatio studiorum*: le poids des ordres mendiants dans leur composition, l'attention portée par les chercheurs au niveau de connaissance de leurs destinataires ainsi que la survie que certains recueils d'origine médiévale connurent jusqu'à la fin du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle.

L'examen des anciens catalogues de bibliothèques montre que les œuvres complètes d'Aristote étaient peu nombreuses dans les couvents des ordres mendiants. Il était donc indispensable de donner un accès aux textes d'une autre manière pour ceux qui souhaitaient s'initier et entrer en contact avec cette doctrine nouvelle. Comme, d'autre part, tant les dominicains que les franciscains ne permettaient pas à tous leurs frères de suivre les cours de philosophie qui étaient organisés dans leurs *studia*, ils voulaient contrôler leur initiation et les extraits d'Aristote organisés en florilèges ou en manuels leur permettaient de faire face à ces besoins<sup>20</sup>. En plus la plupart des étudiants étaient trop pauvres pour pouvoir acquérir les œuvres indispensables à lire pour suivre les cours. Des compilateurs

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse (éd.), *Les manuscrits des lexiques et glossaires de l'Antiquité tardive à la fin du moyen âge* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Brepols 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Humbertus de Romanis, *Expositio super regulam sancti Augustini*, cap. CXLIV: *De studio philosophiae* (Rome 1888), I, 435: « Sed quaeritur de libris philosophicis et studio in illis quid expediat apud fratres? Respondeo: Quidam fratres sunt omnino inepti ad proficiendum in illis; quidam vero sunt apti ad proficiendum in illis in aliquo, sed non multum; quidam vero sunt ex quorum aptitudine magna ad ista speratur magnus profectus et fructus circa divinam scripturam. Primi nullatenus est permittendum quod studeant in talibus; secundis est concedendum aliquid sed cum discretionem et raro; tertiis vero laxandae sunt habendae circa studium huiusmodi. »

faisant partie de ces ordres se mirent donc au travail et réalisèrent des recueils nombreux répondant ainsi aux attentes de leurs étudiants pauvres, tant pour la philosophie que pour les *Sentences* de Pierre Lombard<sup>21</sup>. En ce qui concerne la philosophie, ils n'hésitèrent pas à récupérer les manuels de logique déjà existant depuis des siècles, à leur ajouter pour la morale les extraits d'œuvres de Sénèque mis en circulation depuis longtemps et à compléter la documentation à l'aide d'extraits choisis dans les ouvrages nouvellement traduits. Ces manuels de philosophie constituaient aussi la base des cours de philosophie. Le fait que ces divers instruments de travail présentaient la plupart du temps des extraits expurgés et vidés de leur substance originelle leur permettaient de les laisser circuler librement entre toutes les mains et n'inquiétaient plus les théologiens.

D'autre part, des grands de ce monde firent aussi appel à des représentants des ordres mendiants afin de se procurer des résumés de doctrines aristotéliennes dont ils ne comprenaient pas la substance. Ce fut le cas du Roi Robert d'Anjou, par exemple, qui voulait se donner un vernis de culture et avoir sous la main des arguments à opposer au pape Jean XXII ou à différents empereurs dans des questions controversées<sup>22</sup>. Ces nouveaux recueils offrent évidemment un contenu bien différent de celui qui était destiné aux jeunes novices des ordres mendiants. Il est d'ailleurs assez remarquable de voir que le même compilateur fait deux fois un travail de résumé et d'extraction pour une œuvre identique, la *Physique* d'Aristote, œuvre dont tous avaient entendu parler et dont ils voulaient prendre connaissance. La première compilation est destinée à ses étudiants, la seconde au Roi Robert d'Anjou. Certains manuscrits ont conservé le résultat de ce double travail et il est intéressant de comparer leur contenu pour mieux comprendre le niveau de culture différent des destinataires<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> On en trouve la mention dans le prologue des *Conclusiones in quatuor libros Sententiarum*, compilation réalisée par Johannes de Fonte, lecteur au *studium* à la fin du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle: « Ad preces studentium dum essem lector in Montepessulano et ut fratres pauperes sub compendio haberent librum sententiarum, ego frater Iohannes de fonte ordinis fratrum minorum per modum conclusionum sententialiter distinctionem quamlibet eiusdem voluminis recollegi et primo primi libri subdens consequenter in quibus magister a doctoribus non tenetur » (extrait du manuscrit conservé à la Bibliothèque vaticane, Pal. Lat. 384, f. 405r).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Samantha Kelly, *The New Solomon. Robert of Naples (1309–1343) and Fourteenth-Century Kingship* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003), 26–49.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse, *Les instruments de travail philosophiques et théologiques, témoins de l'enseignement et de l'influence des ordres mendiants à l'époque de la papauté d'Avignon* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), sous presse.

Enfin, certains recueils connurent un succès énorme et circulèrent dans tous les milieux universitaires européens, surtout dans les universités d'Europe centrale et orientale de création plus récente, tandis que d'autres ne furent pas diffusés. Alors qu'on aurait pu croire que les humanistes allaient rejeter cette littérature de seconde main, on constate que certains florilèges vont continuer à être diffusés et imprimés une centaine de fois jusqu'à la fin du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>24</sup>. Deux facteurs importants interviennent à ce niveau et expliquent cette survie: le premier, la création de l'imprimerie, voit naître la possibilité de diffuser une œuvre en de nombreux exemplaires identiques, fixant ainsi l'état d'un texte. Les premiers imprimeurs qui étaient aussi souvent des philologues, tout en cherchant à diffuser une version correcte d'un ouvrage, s'installaient autour des universités et imprimaient les livres qui avaient du succès auprès des étudiants et des intellectuels. Mais, comme ils étaient aussi commerçants, ils cherchaient à rentabiliser leur travail. Or, les instruments de travail philosophiques continuaient à être utilisés partout, même si de nouveaux manuels moins rudimentaires, basés sur les traductions humanistes, commençaient aussi à voir le jour dans ces milieux. C'est ce qui explique la survie de ces florilèges philosophiques médiévaux.

En Europe occidentale, malgré la protestation de nombreux humanistes qui se mirent à réaliser des manuels plus savants et plus respectueux des originaux, ces florilèges continuèrent cependant à être utilisés et donc imprimés. Leur caractère pratique l'emportait sur le niveau philosophique indispensable qui en était absent, mais qui n'empêchait pas les intellectuels de s'en servir. C'est ici que la méthode scolastique continue à jouer elle aussi un rôle prépondérant. Si des auteurs comme Pétrarque, Descartes, Giordano Bruno, Galilée, Locke et bien d'autres, n'hésitent pas à citer certains extraits d'Aristote dans leurs œuvres, à l'aide de ces citations, ce n'est pas parce qu'ils n'avaient pas une connaissance plus approfondie de l'aristotélisme, mais bien parce que, formés aux exercices obligatoires imposés pendant leurs études, ils avaient eu recours à ces citations extraites de florilèges et, les ayant apprises par cœur, les avaient toujours en mémoire. Lorsqu'il s'agissait de rédiger une œuvre nouvelle et de s'appuyer sur des arguments propres à l'aristotélisme, ils avaient alors la possibilité de lire les œuvres complètes désormais disponibles dans les

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Charles Schmitt, *Auctoritates, Repertorium, Dicta, Sententiae, Flores, Thesaurus and Axiomata: Latin Aristotelian Florilegia in the Renaissance*, in *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung. Paul Moraux gewidmet*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 515–37; Id., *The Rise of the Philosophical Textbook*, in Charles Schmitt-Quentin Skinner (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988), 792–804.

bibliothèques de leurs collèges ou de leurs universités, ce qu'ils ne manquaient pas de faire. Mais ces citations passe-partout qu'ils avaient tous apprises par cœur pendant leur formation créaient une espèce de communauté de pensée entre eux. La *translatio studiorum* s'était réalisée de cette manière lors de leurs études. Le fait de les utiliser encore ultérieurement ne les dérangeait pas, puisqu'ils pouvaient désormais, en cas de besoin, recourir à l'œuvre complète du Stagirite.

Si le moyen âge peut être qualifié de *respublica clericorum*, l'époque classique des 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles devient une *respublica litterarum*. Et les *litterati* continueront encore à étudier, à écrire et même à s'exprimer dans la langue latine des *clerici*, alors qu'ils sont désormais capables de se forger un lexique technique dans leurs langues vernaculaires respectives. On retrouve ici le parcours suivi par Etienne Gilson: « Freudenthal a fort justement remarqué que la considération des sources scolastiques est inévitable pour tous les philosophes du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle; or avant de savoir dans quelle mesure la scolastique a influencé tel ou tel philosophe, il faut d'abord rassembler toutes les marques d'une influence possible de la scolastique sur sa pensée<sup>25</sup>. »

Un autre événement d'importance pour l'histoire de la culture explique aussi le succès que ces florilèges aristotéliens continuèrent encore à avoir après l'invention de l'imprimerie. Il s'agit de la création de l'ordre jésuite en 1540, qui avait dû faire face dès le début à la formation intellectuelle de ses jeunes novices. Le fondateur lui-même avait étudié la théologie à Paris et il devait peut-être avoir eu connaissance, si pas utilisé, l'un ou l'autre florilège aristotélien. Nous savons qu'au début de l'ordre, faute de manuels et d'instruments de travail réalisés par leurs nouveaux professeurs pour introduire les jeunes recrues à la philosophie, les Jésuites ont utilisé, en les commentant, les *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, comme introduction à la philosophie.

On retrouve, en effet, dans plusieurs éditions imprimées, des recueils qui contiennent les citations d'Aristote, classées par ordre alphabétique, suivies d'un bref commentaire fait par un professeur jésuite. Le titre en a été modifié: il s'agit désormais du *Repertorium auctoritatum Aristotelis ordine alphabetico* publié erronément dans la Patrologie latine sous le nom de Bède<sup>26</sup>. D'autres citations extraites de divers auteurs anciens (dont Cicéron) et de quelques auteurs médiévaux du 12<sup>e</sup> et du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle

<sup>25</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Index scolastico-cartésien* (Paris: Vrin, 1979), III–IV.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Patrologia latina*, t. 90, col. 905–1054. L'attribution à Bède est impossible puisque des citations d'auteurs postérieurs figurent dans le recueil.



ont d'ailleurs été ajoutées au matériel original. Le but était d'enrichir le florilège médiéval afin qu'il soit plus représentatif des différentes branches enseignées dans le cadre du trivium et du quadrivium. Dans l'état des recherches actuelles, on peut identifier 24 éditions différentes de ce *Repertorium*. Chacune d'entre elles présente une documentation enrichie à l'aide des notes marginales retrouvées dans certains exemplaires mis en circulation précédemment.

L'un des professeurs, auteur des petits commentaires accompagnant les citations aristotéliennes, est très célèbre: il s'agit du théologien conservateur, Francesco de Toledo, qui recommandait encore à la fin du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle (1596) « que les pères provinciaux ne permettent pas à des jeunes qui ne connaissent pas bien la grammaire d'étudier la logique<sup>27</sup>. » On retrouve encore exprimée ici la peur des théologiens médiévaux face à l'apprentissage d'une argumentation trouvée dans les œuvres logiques d'Aristote. Cette méfiance vis-à-vis de la logique est exemplative et explique le recours fait à des florilèges médiévaux, qui présentaient l'avantage d'avoir déjà éliminé dans les textes originaux, les passages pouvant être « dangereux. » Un autre de ses confrères, Pedro de Fonseca, qui enseignait lui aussi à Coïmbra au 16<sup>e</sup> siècle, est mentionné comme autre commentateur des citations. Ceci nous mène vers un autre réseau et un autre milieu de jésuites très intéressants, celui des *conimbricenses*, encore trop peu connu actuellement et qui mériterait une étude approfondie.

Malgré l'introduction de l'imprimerie et la multiplication des œuvres complètes disponibles, ces recueils continueront à connaître un très grand succès, dans le cadre de la méthode scolastique toujours en vigueur. N'oublions pas que Descartes, par exemple, avait reçu sa première formation philosophique au collège jésuite de la Flèche, dans la première moitié du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle, et que, même si dans certains cas, il rédige ses œuvres en français, il revient très souvent au latin et à la terminologie scolastique, pour être certain que ses lecteurs et interlocuteurs comprennent exactement le sens et les nuances des concepts qu'il utilise<sup>28</sup>. Ces termes leur étaient familiers dans la langue de l'Ecole, à savoir le latin, langue employée pour leur formation classique. De même les citations d'Aristote

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Costanzo Cargnoni, « Libri e biblioteche di Cappuccini della provincia di Siracusa alla fine del sec. XVI, » *Collectanea franciscana*, 77 (2007), 79.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jacqueline Hamesse, « Les racines médiévales de la terminologie philosophique des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, » in Marta Fattori (éd.), *Il vocabolario della République des Lettres. Terminologia filosofica e storia della filosofia. Problemi di metodo* (Firenze: Olschki, 1997), 133-50.



qu'ils avaient apprises par cœur lors des exercices pratiqués dans ce cadre, leur revenaient spontanément en mémoire et continueront à émailler leurs écrits.

Mais à la fin du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle, nous assistons à un tournant. Toute la mentalité change. L'arrêt de l'impression d'éditions nouvelles en 1698 illustre d'ailleurs très bien ce fait. L'état d'esprit des intellectuels a changé. On voit naître un monde nouveau dans lequel la lecture personnelle des auteurs antérieurs revient au goût du jour et devient obligatoire. Les recueils de citations ont perdu leur raison d'être. Les règles de la scolastique, en vigueur pendant cinq siècles, ont fait long feu et sont désormais remplacées par une autre pédagogie. L'esprit scientifique qui s'est mis en place et qui prévaut désormais exige une consultation de première main des textes à lire. Dans ce monde nouveau, des méthodes, adaptées au contexte culturel de l'époque, voient le jour et ces humbles recueils, dont le parcours vient d'être retracé, n'attirent plus les intellectuels. Cependant, ce tour d'horizon rapide a permis de constater que les instruments de travail philosophiques ont eu eux aussi leur rôle à jouer pendant plusieurs siècles et qu'ils participèrent à une *translatio studiorum* modeste, mais très efficace dans le domaine de l'aristotélisme. On retrouve d'ailleurs encore aujourd'hui dans certaines langues européennes – notamment en français – des adages qui en sont issus, ce qui illustre bien l'influence qui fut la leur dans l'histoire de la culture européenne.

Héritiers d'une philosophie grecque et arabe, par l'intermédiaire des traductions latines, les médiévaux vivant dans un monde marqué par le christianisme se trouvèrent face à des problèmes d'ordre divers qu'ils furent contraints de résoudre en fonction de critères propres à leur époque. Il fallait donner accès à ces doctrines nouvelles, sans toutefois corrompre les esprits. Une des solutions mise en œuvre fut le recours à des textes simplifiés et dépourvus de leur substance originale. Les instruments de travail qui en résultèrent ont donné naissance à une *translatio studiorum* indirecte et déformée sans doute, à cause des appauvrissements successifs subis par les textes originaux. Mais malgré ces difficultés, une nouvelle bibliothèque scientifique et philosophique fut désormais accessible aux scolastiques et leur permit d'apporter ainsi leur contribution à l'élaboration de nouvelles doctrines philosophiques.



PART THREE

RENAISSANCE AND EARLY MODERN *TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM*



ILLA LITTERIS GRAECIS ABDITA:  
BESSARION, PLATO, AND THE WESTERN WORLD

Eva Del Soldato

Despite Alfred North Whitehead's famous statement that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato,"<sup>1</sup> the affirmation of Platonism in the early modern age was not an easy affair: in the first half of the fifteenth century, just few decades before Marsilio Ficino started his enterprise in the name of *Academia*, Plato was still little known or misunderstood in the western world.<sup>2</sup> Not only did the predominance of the Aristotelian tradition overshadow Platonic philosophy, there was the lack above all of a direct and correct knowledge of the Platonic texts. Good translations were therefore a decisive instrument in opening up this field, and so it is no exaggeration to claim that the crucial fifteenth-century western conflict over Platonism—which involved personalities such as Cardinal Bessarion and George of Trebizond—may be read and interpreted as a battle of translations.

As is well known, the modern Plato controversy began with the *De differentiis* (*Peri ōn Aristoteles pros Platona diaferetai*) by the pagan philosopher of Mistra, Gemistus Pletho, who wrote it during the Council of Ferrara-Florence, which ratified the ephemeral reunion of the Western and Eastern churches in 1439.<sup>3</sup> In this short treatise Gemistus—certainly driven by

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<sup>1</sup> A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 39.

<sup>2</sup> On Platonism's misadventures, J. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1991); but also J. Kraye, "The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance," in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, eds. A. Baldwin-S. Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 76–85. On Ficino's use of the term *Academia*, cf. the essays by J. Hankins collected in *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), II: 187–395; J. Monfasani, "Two Fifteenth-Century 'Platonic Academies': Bessarion's and Ficino's," in *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici*, Supplementum 42, ed. M. Pade, (Rome: Quasar, 2011): 61–76.

<sup>3</sup> The text is available in B. Lagarde, "Le De differentiis de Pléthon d'après l'autographe de la Marcienne," *Byzantion* 43 (1973), 312–43. On Gemistus see R. Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956); C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistus Pletho: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, I: 193–208; J. Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism in the Fifteenth Century," in *Reconsidering the Renaissance*, ed. M. A. Di Cesare (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), 45–61 (republished in Id., *Byzantine Scholars in*

Hellenophile feelings and in any case opposed to the reunification between the two Churches—exalted Plato's piety in order to undermine the western scholastic preference for Aristotle. By describing the philosopher from Stagira as a sort of atheist, Gemistus intended to lend weight to his revised heathenism at the expense of western Christendom, which he had come to recognize as heavily dependent on Aristotelian texts.

But *De differentiis* was a Greek treatise, inaccessible to most Latin readers. While it aroused an angry conflict in Greece with the future patriarch of Constantinople, Gennadios Scholarios, in the western world the book remained rarely quoted and in practice unknown until its first printed edition in 1540.<sup>4</sup> The real struggle began when two other distinguished Greek scholars, émigrés in Italy and able to express their ideas not only in Greek, but also in Latin, entered the fray. The first was George of Trebizond, a Cretan and a fierce enemy of Platonism in the name of Christianity and Scholastic tradition.<sup>5</sup> The other was Bessarion. Having arrived in Italy as a Basilian monk for the Council of Ferrara-Florence, he rose within a few years to become a powerful cardinal, surrounded by a wide circle of learned Greek and Latin scholars. Although Bessarion never hid his preference for Plato, he did not repudiate Aristotle or Scholasticism.<sup>6</sup> George and Bessarion lived together at the papal court, where George served as apostolic secretary, and for several years Bessarion was his patron, sharing his humanist interests.

But the harmony between George and the cardinal was not destined to last. After a first skirmish over the correct exegesis of a passage in John (21:22) around the early 1450s, the two men were further divided by the translation of Aristotle's *Problemata*, rendered into Latin by George of Trebizond himself in 1452, and two years later by another Greek scholar and protégé of Bessarion, Theodore Gaza.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps offended by the irri-

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*Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and Other Émigrés* (Aldershot-Burlington: Ashgate, 1995), X); B. Tambrun, *Pléthon: Le retour de Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II: 436–40. The first printed edition of Gemistus's book is in B. Donato, *De platonicae atque aristotelicae philosophiae differentia libellus* (Venetiis: Apud Ieronymum Scotum, 1540); (Parisiis: Iacobus Bogardus, 1541).

<sup>5</sup> On George of Trebizond, see in particular: J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); Id. (ed.) *Collectanea trapezuntiana. Texts, Documents and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> The most important monograph is still L. Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann: Funde und Forschungen*, 3 vols. (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1927–1942); reprint (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1967).

<sup>7</sup> Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 170–74; Id., "George of Trebizond's Critique of Theodore Gaza's Translation of the Aristotelian *Problemata*," in *Aristotle's Problemata in*

table character of the Cretan, and impressed by Gaza's philological skill, it was in that precise period that Bessarion ended his patronage of George, who from that moment on began to nurture a bitter hatred toward Bessarion and his circle.<sup>8</sup>

As mentioned above, George translated the *Problemata* in 1452, but he did not make it public until 1454–55, when Gaza dedicated his translation of the same text to Pope Nicholas V.<sup>9</sup> Gaza's translation made George indignant: his reaction was an invective dedicated to King Alfonso of Naples, the *Protectio Problematum Aristotelis*, in which he accused Gaza of having perverted the meaning of Aristotle's work.<sup>10</sup> It is true that Gaza, not trusting the quality of ancient manuscripts, had made significant alterations to the text, adding and removing long passages.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, Gaza intended to correct many of the mistakes contained in medieval Latin versions of the text, such as that of Bartolomeo da Messina. They were deaf interpreters, deserving to be burned, and were the cause of many misunderstandings of Aristotle; it would be better to have no translations at all than the ones they produced ("melius erat nihil habere quam huiusmodi habere"): this is how Gaza stigmatized *veteres interpretes* and their translations in the preface to his own.<sup>12</sup>

George drew a very significant conclusion from Gaza's statement: if Bessarion's protégé spoke in this way, it was because he hated Latins and was driven by *malitia et perfidia*.<sup>13</sup> According to George, medieval translations of Aristotle had a decisive importance for western philosophy: without them, there would be no Albertus Magnus or Thomas Aquinas, no Aegidius Romanus or Scotus. Every learned man should therefore be grateful to the medieval translators, who were not only *fidi interpretes*, unlike Gaza, but also permitted the spread of philosophy among the Latins, at a time when it was almost extinct in Greece.<sup>14</sup> The final suggestion that George made is even more radical: in his opinion there existed a precise connection between Gaza's opposition to *prisci interpretes* and

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*Different Times and Tongues*, eds. P. De Leemans-M. Goyens (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 275–94.

<sup>8</sup> Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 80–102.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 170–71.

<sup>10</sup> The text of Trebizond's *Protectio Problematum Aristotelis* is available in Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion*, III: 274–342.

<sup>11</sup> Gaza's translation is printed in Aristotle, *Opera*, ex rec. I. Bekkeri (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1831–1870), III: 415–74.

<sup>12</sup> George of Trebizond, *Protectio*, 320.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 319–20.

the heathenism of Gemistus Pletho.<sup>15</sup> Evoking the controversial figure of Pletho, who died in 1452, and his condemned book *Laws* (*Oi nomoi*), had a precise meaning for George: Pletho had been Bessarion's teacher at Mistra and by naming him George meant to imply that his pupil was continuing Gemistus's program and trying, helped by men like Gaza, to replace Christian faith—founded on Aristotelianism—with a pagan Platonic theology. In order to defend Christian philosophy, it was as important to be sure that every copy of Pletho's book had been burned, as it was to fight Gaza's translation.<sup>16</sup> In Gaza's perverted version and in his derisory rejection of medieval translations of Aristotle—the same translations which had nourished the great tradition of Scholasticism that arose in the Middle Ages and in particular that of Saint Thomas—George perceived in fact a larger plan to discard Christendom, a plan he was able to describe better in a slightly later work, the *Comparatio philosophiae Aristotelis et Platonis*, written around 1458, but printed only in 1523. In it, George fulminated against Plato as the source of this evil conspiracy: where in the *Protectio* his interest was to defend Aristotelianism and hence Scholasticism, in this case Trebizond preferred to attack, describing Platonism as a subversive school of thought.<sup>17</sup>

Trebizond composed his *Comparatio* as another—longer—invective, denouncing Plato for his philosophy, which he considered impious, and for his life, which he believed was dissolute. He fought every attempt to reconcile Plato and Aristotle, recognizing in the latter the true champion of Christianity and a true Christian as well, in spite of all historical evidence. Moreover, George developed a personal genealogy of Platonism, which runs parallel to Greece's decadence and, starting from Plato, continues through Epicurus and Mohammed, and culminates with Gemistus Pletho and a mysterious and dangerous fourth Plato.<sup>18</sup> His ambitious aim was to save Latins from the same destiny of destruction which the appreciation of Platonism would inevitably bring: "That is why I have to deliver

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. On the *Oi nomoi* see Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, 393–404; Monfasani, "Platonic Paganism;" Id., "Pletho's date of death and the burning of his Laws," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 98 (2005), 459–63.

<sup>17</sup> George of Trebizond, *Comparatio philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis* (Venetiis: per Iacobum Pentium de Leuco, 1523); photographic reprint (Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1965). On George and Platonism as philosophy of subversion in Europe: E. Garin, "Il platonismo come ideologia della sovversione europea. La polemica antiplatonica di Giorgio Trapezunzio," in *Studia humanitatis Ernesto Grassi zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. E. Hora-E. Kessler (München: Fink, 1973), 113–20.

<sup>18</sup> George of Trebizond, *Comparatio*, Tvi r–Xii v.



my help as fast and as carefully possible, because now he is trying to enter Italy, after having completely subverted the Greeks with his customs and doctrine.”<sup>19</sup>

George stated that Greek had permitted Plato to keep his depravity hidden to the Latins until then (“Plato enim latinus non erat”), but now, thanks to the many Platonic works finally available in translation (“latina oratione”), it would be a simple job to demonstrate it: “now, in truth, since many of his works have been translated in Latin, it will be very easy for us to establish his corruption and his ignorance.”<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps George was referring to his own versions of *Laws*, *Epinomides* and *Parmenides*, a series of translations made on commission which also contained manipulations, mostly intended to undermine Plato’s reputation, in a sort of appendix to the *Comparatio*.<sup>21</sup> Otherwise he was distorting the truth: Plato was not yet well known in the West, and if there existed many prejudices against him and his works, he was read even less by Latins directly. In the Middle Ages *Meno* and *Phaedo* were the only texts completely (and badly) translated into Latin, even if the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides* were available in partial and widespread versions.<sup>22</sup> Other dialogues were translated into Latin before the 1460s, yet early fifteenth-century Latin versions of Plato were in general philosophically inconsistent, and in many cases modified and bowdlerized.<sup>23</sup>

Cardinal Bessarion was unaware of George’s *Comparatio* until when Trebizond himself announced it in a short treatise—probably coeval—about the deliberation of nature according to Aristotle, in which he attacked another text on the same subject, but from a Platonic perspective, by Bessarion himself.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., f. N iii r: “Quare nobis tanto citius diligentiusque subveniendum est, quanto iam moribus et doctrina sua Graecis penitus eversis, in Italiam trasire conatur.”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Aiiii r: “Nunc vero, quoniam multa eius in romanam sunt lingua traducta volumina, facilissimum nobis erit pravitatem eius et ignorantiam . . . constituere.”

<sup>21</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, I: 190–91; II: 429–35. George’s translation of *Parmenides* is available in I. Ruocco, *Il Platone latino. Il Parmenide: Giorgio da Trebisonda e il cardinale Cusano* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> J. Hankins-A. Palmer, *The Recovery of Ancient Philosophy in the Renaissance: A Brief Guide* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2008), 10–11.

<sup>23</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, I, 29–159.

<sup>24</sup> J. Monfasani, “A tale of two books: Bessarion’s *In calumniatorem Platonis* and George of Trebizond’s *Comparatio Platonis et Aristotelis*,” *Renaissance Studies* 22 (2008), 1–15; E. Del Soldato, “Platone, Aristotele e il cardinale: il *De natura et arte* di Bessarione,” *Rinascimento* 48 (2008), 61–79.

The cardinal understood immediately the danger embedded in George's book: in spite of Trebizond's words about the spread of Latin translations of Plato, as stated above, Plato was not yet really known in the West and a Latin work like George's risked creating a decisive misunderstanding of his doctrines. Although he recognized that Plato was not a Christian—how could he have been?—Bessarion was deeply convinced of the utility of Platonism for Christianity, and abandoning his earlier position, strongly influenced by Gemistus Pletho, according to which Plato and Aristotle were philosophically irreconcilable, he strategically decided to insist on the fundamental harmony between the two philosophers.<sup>25</sup>

This conciliatory spirit inspired many short writings by Bessarion and his *familiares*, which appeared while the cardinal was elaborating his answer to the *Comparatio*.<sup>26</sup> And it was a long elaboration: at first, not being completely skilled in Latin, Bessarion composed a long Greek treatise in three books to oppose point by point every one of George's slanders against Plato. But he soon realized that such a work would not have any impact on the Latin audience to which George had cunningly addressed his invective. Therefore, first by himself, and then thanks to the help of Perotti, Gaza, Gatti and other learned men of his circle, Bessarion completely revised the work, adding three books and translating all six books into Latin: in 1469 *In calumniatorem Platonis* was ready to be printed.<sup>27</sup>

Several passages of the work explain Bessarion's strategy clearly in order to make Plato acceptable to the Latin world and closer to western sensibilities and interests. Affirming the fundamental harmony between Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, and exalting Plato's wisdom, Bessarion

<sup>25</sup> Del Soldato, "Platone, Aristotele e il cardinale," 72.

<sup>26</sup> J. Monfasani, "Theodore Gaza as a philosopher: a preliminary survey," in *Manuele Crisolora e il ritorno del greco in Occidente. Atti del convegno internazionale (Napoli, 26–29 giugno 1997)*, eds. R. Maisano-A. Rollo (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 2002), 269–81; 276; reprint in Id., *Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), IV. Important as well the Bessarion's letter to Michael Apostolios (19 may 1462), published in Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion*, III: 511–14.

<sup>27</sup> Bessarion, *Adversus calumniatorem Platonis* (Romae: C. Sweynheym & A. Pannartz, 1469). For practical reasons I will quote from the modern edition in Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion*, II (books I–IV); III (book VI), using the abbreviation ICP. On the different phases of composition see J. Monfasani, "Bessarion Latinus," *Rinascimento* 21 (1981), 165–209; Id., "Still more on Bessarion Latinus," *Rinascimento* 23 (1983), 217–235. (also in Id., *Byzantine scholars in Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and other Emigrés*, II–III); Id., "A tale of two books." See also Id., "Niccolò Perotti and Bessarion's *In calumniatorem Platonis*," *Renaissanceforum*. Tidsskrift for Renaessanceforskning, 7 (2011): 181–216. Bessarion explicitly addresses his Latin readers more frequently (*andres Latinoi*) in the Greek original. In the printed Latin version, largely revised by Perotti, the expression is often substituted with *virī optimi* (see e.g. Bessarion, ICP (IV, 2) II: 475), if not deleted entirely: *ibid.* (VI, 9) II: 574–75; (VI, 17), II: 622–23.

calls forth a series of Latin *auctoritates*, many of the same ones that George had used, but for the opposite purpose: Cicero, Boethius, Albertus Magnus and Thomas (but also Saint Jerome, Macrobius, Seneca, Apuleius and many others “quos enumerare longissimus esset”).<sup>28</sup> A passage in the sixth book, the last according to the order of the printed work, but the first to be originally composed, is particularly decisive in this sense. If George—author of the most important handbook of Renaissance rhetoric and a loyal Ciceronian—had used Cicero in order to demonstrate Plato’s scarce abilities in rhetoric, Bessarion could easily introduce several of Cicero’s passages in which the great Latin writer praises Plato’s style and doctrine.<sup>29</sup> If George stated that Plato was a danger to Christian religion, Bessarion would reply that all the Greek and Latin Fathers—in particular Augustine—often appealed to Plato in their writings with respect and admiration (and the corollary is obvious: by offending Plato, George was offending the Holy Fathers as well).<sup>30</sup> And again, if George denied any possible reconciliation between Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophies, Bessarion would affirm that not only many Greek authors, but also many Latin wise men had tried to demonstrate that it was possible, above all Boethius.<sup>31</sup> More significantly, however, Bessarion also suggested that Albertus Magnus, who followed Aristotle almost everywhere, appreciated and praised Plato, even though he had access to just a few Platonic ideas thanks to Proclus’s translation, and completely lacked Latin versions of genuine Platonic works: “at that time nothing about the Platonic philosophy was available in a Latin translation.”<sup>32</sup>

This is the western course of Platonism described by Bessarion: after being venerated by such learned and pious men as Cicero, Augustine, Boethius and Albertus, Plato disappeared simply because there were not any Latin versions of his dialogues, or, at least there were no decent Latin versions of them. Beyond George’s accusations of a plot in Gemistus Pletho’s name, Gaza’s rejection of the medieval translations of Aristotle came out of a purely literary and humanist debate.<sup>33</sup> Bessarion’s accusations against the manipulated fifteenth-century versions of Plato—certainly including those by George—had a different tone, however: bad

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. (VI, 9) III: 145 (but also compare (I, 3) II: 23–27).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. (VI, 9) III: 145.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.: “nihil enim tunc Platonicae disciplinae in latinam linguam conversum habebatur.”

<sup>33</sup> Monfasani, “George of Trebizond’s Critique,” 293, connects Gaza’s position to the later program of Ermolao Barbaro.

translations of Plato did not only compromise the style of the philosopher, but falsified his ideas to the point of rendering them unrecognizable.<sup>34</sup> This is the complaint made by the cardinal, and it explains perfectly the urgency which brought him to compose the *In calumniatorem* after George had published the *Comparatio*.

Bessarion writes:

I have considered... that I have to bring my help to Plato, even if an impudent tongue would not be able to damage his doctrine and moral stature, at least no more than a small cloud can obfuscate the dazzling brightness of the sun. Moreover I would have deemed it extremely incongruous and wrong that such things [the *Comparatio*] were read without any cross-examination, in particular by Latin-tongued men, who don't have Plato's works available, or, if they have them translated in Latin, are not used to reading them. We will demonstrate Plato's versatile learning.... Although these things were already known and investigated by Greeks, they are still unknown to Latin men of our age.... The passage of time, human negligence and sloppiness have caused all memory of them to be lost....<sup>35</sup>

A few pages later the lack of awareness of Plato's works among Latins, even if they possess some of them in translation, is explained by the terrible quality of these versions:

Therefore, I can't be surprised enough by our opponent [George], because he believed that his slander can endure for a long time in spite of the truth, unless he was deceived for this reason, that is that he has addressed his treatise to Latins, who don't have Plato's books or possess them only in confused, wrong and mystified versions on account of bad translators, to the

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<sup>34</sup> The fifth book of ICP is in fact a confutation, not always reliable, of George's translation of *Laws*. In the fourth book as well, Bessarion attacks George for his hypocrisy: in offering his translation of the *Laws* to Venice, Trebizond had claimed that nothing better had ever been written about politics, but in the *Comparatio* he criticized as impious this very text: if they are so dangerous, why did he open the *Laws*, otherwise hidden by their Greek form ("illas litteris graecis abditas"), to the Latin audience? (see Bessarion, ICP (IV, 17) II, 631). There does not exist a modern edition of the fifth book, but about its content see Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, I: 191–92.

<sup>35</sup> Bessarion, ICP (I, 1) II: 9 (translations are mine), "Censui... tum etiam Platoni succurendum, cui tametsi propter doctrinam morumque praestantiam non magis obesse linguae procacitas potest, quam tenuis nubecula radiantem solis splendorem obscurare. Perabsurdum tum et periniquum iudicarem legi haec sine contradictione, ab hominibus praesertim Latinis, qui aut Platonis opera non habent, aut si qua habent in Latinam linguam conversa, perraro ea lelege consueverunt. Atqui Platonis doctrinam variam atque multiplicem... demonstrabimus.... Haec enim etsi Graecis hominibus cognita atque explorata sunt, a Latinis tamen nostrae aetatis ignorantur.... Obscuravit haec nihilo minus seu vetustas seu incuria et negligentia hominum...."

point that they can scarcely be read without irritating one's own sensibility. So he had hoped that his misdeed would remain unpunished.<sup>36</sup>

And the same concept is reaffirmed in the following book:

It is not our intention to say if Aristotle had written or spoken better or worse [than Plato] about these subjects... nor will we say anything against him... But we will try to expose with a great effort Plato's opinions, because they are unknown by almost all Latins, in part because Plato's books are not translated into Latin, in part because the few that are don't express the real author's position, having been corrupted by the incapability of their translators.<sup>37</sup>

Bessarion conducts his apology of Plato along a double track, *costruens* and *destruens*: on the one hand the cardinal has to make the Latin world, used to Aristotelianism as synonymous with philosophy, familiar with Platonic ideas; on the other hand, he has to demonstrate that George has defamed Plato, who in reality was the purest and wisest of men. The frequent insertions of Plato's quotations function in both ways: Bessarion translates long passages from *Parmenides*, *Laws* and *Epinomides*, but also from *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Cratylus*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, *Thaetetus*, etc. In fact, Bessarion is completely sure that a direct reading of Plato's dialogues will be enough to silence George's slander. The challenge he accepts in the fourth book, the one dedicated to Plato's moral virtue, is very significant. George had invited Latin men to revile the *Phaedrus*, a work in which in his opinion Plato supposedly exalted an unnatural form of love, saying: "Read, read that *Phaedrus*, if you don't believe me, or ask someone who has read it, unless he is a supporter of Plato."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. (I, 5) II: 67: "Quam ob rem admirari satis hunc eius adversarium non possum, quod calumnias suas latere diutius contra veritatem posse exstimaverit, nisi forte ea causa deceptus est, quod cum Latinis scriberet, qui vel Platonis libros non habent, vel vitio interpretum ita obscuros habent, ineptos, mendosos, ut vix legi sine stomacho possint. Tutum proinde fore malefium suum speravit."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. (II, 3) II: 85–87: "Nos certe, ut Aristoteles de his rebus melius deteriusque aut cogitarit aut scripserit, minime dicemus... nec aliud quicquam adversus eum loquimur... Platonis vero opiniones summo studio conabimur exponere, quoniam omnibus fere Latinis ignotae sunt, partim quia libri eius in Romanam conversi linguam non habentur, partim quod, si habentur interpretum vitio minus recte sententiam sui exprimunt auctoris."

<sup>38</sup> George of Trebizond, *Comparatio*, Nv r: "Legite, legite ipsum, qui non creditis, aut ab eis qui legerunt, nisi Platonis laudi faveant, quaeritote."

Bessarion agrees: Latins should read *Phaedrus*, and he offers himself to translate it, but for the opposite reason, to demonstrate George's lies. He writes:

But read, o Latin men, the *Phaedrus*, I implore you. In fact, I don't prevent you from doing it, but on the contrary I ask you and I beg you, and—very willingly—I offer myself to translate it, in order to make you understand very clearly the slander and the false accusations of that man.... Actually, not being able to produce anything if not against himself, he produced nothing, but he suggests that Latins read *Phaedrus* by themselves. How can they read it, if they don't know Greek? And if they know Greek, why doesn't he employ them as witnesses, instead of inviting them to read it? Such reluctance, I must confess, is not typical of a wise or honest man.<sup>39</sup>

Similar assertions are made in defense of the *Symposium* and the *Laws*.<sup>40</sup>

But Bessarion's translation project was not limited to Plato's own works: it had to be enlarged to a greater number of authors, first of all the witnesses for the defense. Without listing all the sources Bessarion quotes in *In calumniatorem Platonis*, which included Lysides's letter to Hypparchus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Diogenes Laertius, and Proclus, it is important to point out that the same year Bessarion's work was printed, 1469, other Platonic texts were translated and published for the first time in Latin: Apuleius's *De deo Socratis*, *De Platone et eius dogmate* and Alcinous's *Epitoma disciplinarum Platonis*, which appeared in the same volume. And the relationship between this volume and the *In Calumniatorem Platonis* is not restricted to the printing year and the printers, Konrad Sweynheim and Arnold Pannartz: the translators—Andrea de Bussi and Pietro Balbi—were both associates of Bessarion, and Bussi, in particular, addresses his work to the cardinal. Undoubtedly Bussi's and Balbi's translations were part of a larger project, almost certainly patronized by Bessarion, aimed at promoting Platonic philosophy.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Bessarion, ICP (IV, 2) II: 453–55: "Sed legite, quaeso, *Phaedrum*, viri Latini. Nihil enim impedio, immo rogo et oro et in eo interpretando operam meam libentissime praesto, ut hominis calumnias et falso obiecta crimina percipere aperte possitis.... Verum quia proferre nihil nisi adversus se poterat, nihil protulit, sed mittit Latinos ad *Phaedrum* legendum. Qui si litteras nesciunt Graecas, qui legere possunt? Si sciunt, cur eos testes non adhibet, sed ad legendum transmittit? Enimvero ista tergiversatio nec docti, nec probi hominis est."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 493; and (IV, 7) II: 537–39: "In qua re necessarium fuit pleraque loca Platonis interpretari, ut Latini Graecam ignorentes linguam, quid ex illius sententia legerent, haberent."

<sup>41</sup> The connection between the editorial choices of Sweynheim and Pannartz and Bessarion's defense of Platonism is well argued by M. D. Feld, "Sweynheim and Pannartz, Cardinal Bessarion, Neoplatonism: Renaissance Humanism and two Early Printers' choice of texts," *Harvard Library Bulletin* XXX (1982), 282–335. See also G. A. Bussi, *Prefazioni alle*

Bessarion did not merely want to offer Platonic doctrines to the Latin world, but—in a sort of counterattack—he also turned to translations in order to warn against a fideistic alliance between Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology. An obvious example of this attitude is found at the end of the third book, where he corrects some tendentious readings of the Aristotelian texts used by George to describe the Stagirite as a good follower of Christ. Instead, calling on authorities such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, Averroes, Themistius and Theophrastus, Bessarion states that in *On the soul* and in *On the generation of animals*, Aristotle affirmed that the soul comes from outside, and does not begin from within the body as George asserted: as usual Trebizond did not translate, but perverted the text (“non id convertit, sed pervertit”).<sup>42</sup>

This line of argument is especially present in the second book, where Bessarion makes exclusive use of an author to whom little attention had been paid in the West after Gerard of Cremona’s versions of his work in the twelfth century: Alexander of Aphrodisias.<sup>43</sup>

In his *Comparatio* George had stated that according to Plato providence does not exist and that everything happens according to fate and necessity. Aristotle, by contrast, would have clearly stated that divine providence rules the world.<sup>44</sup> Bessarion replied that Plato wrote many things about providence, even if he did not speak of it in a Christian sense, but on the other hand he suggested that Aristotle negated its existence. The cardinal wrote as follows:

It is difficult to understand what Aristotle thought about it [providence]. In fact nothing written by him about providence can be found, as Alexander of Aphrodisias—a very careful interpreter of his works—relates. When Alexander has to speak about providence, he states that it is for him a difficult subject, because he doesn’t have any explicit indication on providence in Aristotle’s works.<sup>45</sup>

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edizioni di Sweynheym e Pannartz prototipografi romani, ed. M. Miglio (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1978); C. Bianca, *Da Bisanzio e Roma: Studi sul cardinal Bessarione* (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2000), 37–39.

<sup>42</sup> Bessarion, ICP (III, 27) II: 409.

<sup>43</sup> On Alexander’s presence in the Renaissance, Hankins-Palmer, *The Recovery of Ancient Philosophy*, 27–29.

<sup>44</sup> George of Trebizond, *Comparatio*, D iv r; and also L vii r–M ii v.

<sup>45</sup> Bessarion, ICP (II, 9) II: 167: “Quo in loco quid Aristoteles de iisdem rebus senserit, iudicare difficile est. Nihil enim tale ab eo scriptum legitur, ut Alexander Aphrodisiensis testatur, qui librorum eius diligentissimus indagator fuit. Hic cum de providentia disserendum esset, difficilem sibi eam materiam esse dixit, quod nihil de ea certi ab Aristotele cognitum haberet.”



Bessarion indicates that there might be a passage in the twelfth book of *Metaphysics* (1072b 18–21) in which Aristotle denies the action of divine intelligence on the human and sublunary being. But Alexander is the key to understanding Aristotle's real position:

However, I will expose what Alexander seems to take from Aristotle's sentence, so that Latin men, who are not able to read Greek, will be able to understand and give their opinion.<sup>46</sup>

And in fact, after having quoted long passages from Alexander's *Quaestiones*, until then unknown to the Latin world, Bessarion is able to conclude as follows:

First, [according to Aristotle] there isn't any providence over immaterial and intelligible things, not active, nor passive; secondly heavens and world, which Aristotle believed to be an eternal, ingenerate and incorruptible God, don't need any providence for their being or for their well-being; third, according to these words, it seems that the world doesn't have any efficient cause, if it really doesn't need anything which takes care of it; fourth, providence would take care only of generable and corruptible things; ... fifth and finally, this providence is not primarily and *per se*, but it is consequently and *per accidens*. ... If these things can be in harmony with our religion, as our opponent pretends, it will be judged by men who had read with attention Aristotle's real opinions. In fact, these things handed down by Alexander, are not to be read as his own inventions, but as if we had received them from Aristotle himself. In fact, there is no one who had investigated more diligently than Alexander Aristotle's books, or had explained them in a more precise or elegant way.<sup>47</sup>

The selection of Alexander as the best interpreter of Aristotle<sup>48</sup> and the presentation of large portions of his writings in Latin are both strategic

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 169: "Verum quid ex sententia Aristotelis Alexander dicere videatur, exponam, ut Latini homines, qui Graecos libros non legerint, intellegere possint et iudicare."

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 173: "Primum, nullam omnino providentiam rerum intelligibilium et immaterialium poni vel activam vel passivam. Secundum, caelum et universum hunc mundum, quem deum aeternum, ingentum, incorruptibilem opinatur, nulla vel ut sit vel ut bene sit, providentia egere. Tertium, quod ex dictis sequi videtur, mundum nullam causam efficientem aliunde habere, siquidem neque ut sit, aliquo egere, qui provideat. Quartum, dumtaxat generabilium et corruptibilium rerum... providentiam haberi. Quintum atque postremum, ne hanc quidem providentiam praecipue atque per se, sed consequenter atque per accidens fieri. ... Haec utrum religioni nostrae et fidei Christianae consentanea sint, ut adversarium optaret, iudicent iam qui Aristotelis opinionem avidè perceperunt. Quae enim Alexander tradit, non secus, quam si ab Aristotele acciperemus, iudicanda sunt, cum nemo omnium sit, qui libros Aristotelis vel diligentius indagarit vel exquisitius ac certius exposuerit."

<sup>48</sup> On this aspect, also see Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, I: 257.



moves to offer a new and more correct image of Aristotle to western scholars: Bessarion doesn't want to condemn the Stagirite philosopher as impious, but it is important for him to demonstrate that Aristotelianism cannot reflect Christian theology, against George's position, and he can strengthen his own position by presenting new sources, until then ignored because they had never been translated, to a Latin audience.

Replying to George's attacks, Bessarion was able to demonstrate his enemy's bias, letting the ancient texts speak for themselves, and making himself guarantor of this special cultural mediation, stating explicitly that an inspection of Platonic texts made by a Greek would easily demonstrate the truth and unmask false accusations against Plato.<sup>49</sup> By recovering in a Latin form books until then available only in Greek and therefore unknown to the western cultural tradition, the cardinal was able to outline a model of philosophy which decisively enriched the Platonism known to the Latin world in his day. Bessarion's Plato wasn't the original one—the cardinal was in fact strongly influenced by Proclus—but after all it was very similar to the Neoplatonic Plato which Ficino would subsequently employ and which would serve as a foundation for the future success of this philosophical tradition in later centuries.<sup>50</sup> In any case, by enlarging the availability of Platonic texts and sources, Bessarion opposed a new complete encyclopedia of knowledge to the Aristotelian one, corrected some false conceptions of Plato built on selective readings of his dialogues, and opened the traditional alliance between Aristotelianism and Christianity to discussion: in a few words, by offering to the Latin audience Platonic texts and ideas, Bessarion defeated George's cultural program, which could only survive as long as ignorance or indifference toward Plato and his philosophy reigned in the western world.

Bessarion's intentions were clear to his contemporaries, as we can see in several letters by Antonio Beccadelli—also known as Panormita—and John Argyropoulos. If Beccadelli rejoiced because finally Rome could enjoy Plato's gentle eloquence thanks to the cardinal's book, the second appreciated not only the Platonic style, but in particular that:

Moreover, you [Bessarion] have been able to reveal many and beautiful philosophers' doctrines, not only to our contemporaries, but also to our

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<sup>49</sup> Bessarion, ICP (IV, 1) II: 439: "An forte Latinos homines fallere se posse adversarius censuit? At ne Latini quidem auctoritatem tanti philosophi unius homuncionis verbis deicere animi potuissent, et Graecos facile erat veritatem rei detegere et falsam atque iniustam criminationem confutare atque refellere."

<sup>50</sup> Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II: 441–44.

descendants. That's why the whole of humanity must be beholden to you forever. But in particular Latin men should be grateful to you for such a benefit.<sup>51</sup>

This special benefit for the Latins was nothing less than the return of Platonism.

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<sup>51</sup> "Praeterea multas praeclarasque sententias philosophorum occasionem nactus non modo praesentibus, sed etiam posteris aperuisti. Quapropter non mediocres tibi perpetuo gratias genus mortalium debet. Imprimis autem tanti tibi beneficii obnoxii sunt Latini." Both letters are published in Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion*, III: 600–02.

ARISTOTLE TO THE RESCUE:  
PERERIUS, CHARRON, GLANVILL AND THOMASIUŠ\*

Constance Blackwell

1. *Introduction*

Richard Popkin gave the name “methodical doubt” to the philosophical method of Pierre Charron,<sup>1</sup> linking his despair about the impossibility of knowledge with the traditions of skepticism and fideism.<sup>2</sup> This was a problematic identification even for Popkin, because he had to admit that Charron—and he grouped Descartes and Gassendi with him—was not a skeptic. While I disagree with Popkin that Charron’s doubt and questioning of authority came out of the skeptical tradition, nevertheless, his observation that these three philosophers employed doubt to drive their search for knowledge is an important observation. This paper will suggest that Charron arose from quite a different tradition, one in which questioning and doubting were turned into a philosophical method that eliminated false dogmas and logic. This freed the philosopher from past errors and permitted him to construct his own interpretation of the text. I argue that the source of this method can be found in one of the sixteenth-century Aristotelian traditions.

Although this tradition is one not usually associated with doubt, there is substantial evidence that methodical doubt grew out one strand of sixteenth-century Aristotelian philosophy. One philosopher who used it we

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<sup>1</sup> Tullio Gregory, “Aristotélisme et libertinisme,” in *Genèse de la raison classique de Charron à Descartes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 63–80; Jose Maia Neto, *Charron’s epoche and Descartes’ cogito, the skeptical base of Descartes’s Refutation of Skepticism*, in Gianni Paganini (ed.), *The Return of Skepticism from Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003) 81–113; Jose Maia Neto, “Acquired skepticism in the seventeenth century” in Jose Maria Neto, Gianni Paganini, and John Christian Laursen (eds.), *Skepticism in the Modern Age: Building on the work of Richard Popkin* (Leiden, Brill, 2009) 309–24.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).

will study here: *Benito* Pereira of the Collegio Romano.<sup>3</sup> He published his *De communibus omnium rerum* first in 1577, while Charron's *De la Sagesse* was first printed in 1601. The two, who are not usually grouped together, were contemporaries, Pereria (1535–1610) living in Rome and Charron, a friend of Montaigne, in France (1541–1603). I contend that each philosopher employed methodical doubt: Pereira employed it to deconstruct philosophical dogmas so that they could be examined individually and arguments judged, while Charron turned methodical doubt into the personal and intellectual method through which philosophy was transformed into an exercise for philosophical self-examination. He aimed to achieve a tranquility of mind that would enable him to freely select correct ways of thinking and feeling to achieve a *liberte d'esprit*. Pereira began the method for compiling critically accumulated information for the new genre—the history of philosophy—while Charron led the way for the person of the philosopher himself to become the method through which philosophy is viewed.

## 2. *A Short History of Aristotelian Doubt*

My recent research reveals that the methodical doubt developed in the sixteenth century grew out of commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 3, 1. As Vasilis Politis points out, it is here that Aristotle states that what directs metaphysical enquiry is the puzzlement (*aporia*).<sup>4</sup> The importance of this text is suggested by its use as a statement of method in Benito Pereira's *De communibus omnium rerum*. After reading the Latin transla-

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<sup>3</sup> Benito Pereira, *De communibus omnium rerum naturalium principiis et affectionibus, libri quindecim qui plurimum conferunt, ad eos octo libros Aristotelis qui de physico auditu inscribuntur intelligendo* (Paris 1585); Rome 1576, 1585, Venice 1587, 91, Paris, 1585, Lyon, 1588, Cologne 1495, 1603, 1609, 1618, 1619. See *Benito Pereira*, in Charles H. Lohr, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries* (Florence: Olschki, 1988), vol. 2; Constance Blackwell, *Neo-Platonic modes of concordism versus definitions of difference: Simplicius, Augustinus Steuco and Ralph Cudworth versus Marco Antonio Zimara and Benito Pereira*, in *Laus Platonic Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and his Influence*, eds. Stephen Clucas, Peter J. Forshaw and Valery Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2011); *Aristotle's Perplexity become Descartes's doubt*, in *Skepticism in the Modern Ages: Building on the Work of Richard Popkin*, 231–248; "Thomas Aquinas against the Scotists and Platonists," *Akademiai Klado* 6 (2004), 179–88; "The vocabulary for a natural philosophy, the *de primo cognito* question—a preliminary exploration: Zimara, Toledo, Pereira and Zabarella" in Marta Fattori and Jacqueline Hamesse, *Lexique et Glossaires Philosophique de la Renaissance* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Vasilis Politis, *Aristotle's Method in Metaphysics* 3, 1, in *Aristotle and Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 64–89.

tion of this text in Pereira, and realizing that the Latin text had a very different connotation from that of the original Greek or translations from current translations from Greek into English, it was clear that a wider study should to be undertaken to investigate this. How widely was the text quoted or commented upon by other philosophers? How did the change in meaning from Aristotle's puzzlement (*aporia*) to *dubito* meaning doubt influence philosophical thinking?

It all begins with the translation of *Metaphysics* 3.1 by William of Moerbeke, which renders Aristotle's *aporeo* as *dubito*. The connotation of *dubito* for Moerbeke was to question. This translation was read by everyone from Thomas Aquinas,<sup>5</sup> was included in the translation of Cardinal Bessarion's fifteenth century and remained the one version used through the sixteenth century. How do you translate *aporeo*? One Hellenist, Richard Madigan, refused to translate the word and used it as an English one.<sup>6</sup> There are various translations of *Metaphysics* 3.1. The translation I give below is by Richard Hope is from the original Greek, the word doubt is not used.

A difficulty in our thinking reveals a tangle in existence, since thought encountering a difficulty is like a man bound; neither the thought nor the man can move. Hence, we must first understand our perplexities both for the reason given and also because who ever engages in a research without having first stated his problems is like a person who does not know where he is going or whether or not he has found what he wants.<sup>7</sup>

The contrast with an English translation of Thomas Aquinas's Latin version (which drew on Moerbeke) is striking:

First he says that for those who wish to investigate the truth it is "worth while to ponder these difficulties well, i.e. to examine carefully those matters which are open to question. To doubt well is to pay close attention to those things which are doubtful, this is why the later discovery of truth is nothing other than the solving of former doubt. . . . He says that it is necessary for this

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan, introd. Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Richard Madigan refused to translate *aporeo*, *aporia* in his translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on the *Metaphysics* saying there is no English equivalent, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle's Metaphysics 2 & 3*. Translated & notes W. E. Dooley & A. Madigan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated by Richard Hope (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 40–41.

science in which we search for primary principles and the truth of all things, it is first necessary to doubt before the truth can be established.<sup>8</sup>

In the sixteenth century there was much discussion about what kind of doubt Aristotle used and whether it was an affective way to philosophize. It was Pierre de la Ramée who seems to have been the one to change the connotation of *dubito* from to question to doubt. In his *Scholarum metaphysicarum*<sup>9</sup> he renames the third book of the *Metaphysics* *Theologium dubitationum*, and audaciously transforms Socrates's famous quotation that an admission of one's own ignorance is the beginning of wisdom into an object of satire. Wisdom he states is the resolutions of doubts. He writes:

But divine metaphysician, what is this new academy of yours? The academic philosophers debated on both sides of the question, but in a perpetual and continuous dialogue following the different arguments. What laws are there concerning this new way of practicing philosophy in that whole logic of yours? . . . Are these scholastics the new skeptical academy?<sup>10</sup>

Further *In libros Metaphysicorum*, Pedro de Fonseca (1528–1599)<sup>11</sup> indicates that he questions the usefulness of *dubito* as did Francesco Suarez (1548–1617).<sup>12</sup> Thus while those writing scholastic commentaries that traditionally employed *dubito*, *dubitandi* questioned whether it should be used, Charron and Pereira employed it to deconstruct philosophy, employing the formula doubt and questioning to take apart statements and question answers. Why they found doubt so attractive will be part of the substance of the article.

### 3. Benito Pereira to De-construct, and Then Reconstruct the History of Greek Philosophy

Because Pereira's *De communibus omnium rerum*, compiled from his lectures on natural philosophy at the Collegio Romano,<sup>13</sup> includes statements

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics* (Chicago: Regnery, 1961) 177–80.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre de la Ramée, *Scholarum metaphysicarum* (Paris, 1566), tertium, 45–61.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Pedro da Fonseca, *Commentaria Petri Fonsecae in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae* (Rome: Zabettus & Tosius, 1577), 435–36.

<sup>12</sup> Francisco Suárez, *A Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Richard Blum, "Benedictus Pererius: Renaissance Culture at the Origins of Jesuit Science," *Science & Education* 15 (2006), 279–304.

of method, it directs the reader how to bring order to the mass of new philosophical information that became available: the reprinting of medieval texts, the translations into Latin of Greek commentaries on Aristotle in the 1540s, as well as the new work by Cardano and Telesio that challenged the Aristotelian encyclopedia. In the space available we will only discuss how Pereira uses methodical doubt to take examine Ficino's chronology of the Greek philosopher. Parmenides is selected because newly available texts quoted in Simplicius commentary on *Physics* 1, that fragments of his philosopher first became available.

There are many traditions that have been grouped under the rubric of Aristotelian. Pereira gives notice to the reader of exactly which tradition he was critical: Scotism (the tradition out of which Descartes came) and Platonism, as well as the *Thomisti* (followers of Aquinas who also followed Avicenna). He also argued that "the first things thought" in natural philosophy came from the senses, a topic much discussed in the *de primo cognito* debates, a topic also of interest to Zimara, Toletus, Zabarella and Gassendi, as well as many others.

He opens Book four, *De Antiquis philosophis, eorumque, variis circa rerum naturalium principia, opinionibus* with his statement of method, first quoting from *Topics* 1 and then *Metaphysics* 3, 1. I have translated both passages from the Latin translation from the original Greek.

First of all Aristotle taught in *Topics* I that the several known and acknowledged opinions of famous philosophers supply a great force and richness for discussing the probability of any topic proposed. This is to be regarded as a probability if it seems to be accepted by all wise men, or by many, or even by one so long as he is excellent. Then the multitude and variety of opinions on any matter makes us doubt and notice the difficulties, which are concealed in that topic.

Aristotle is setting out a method for investigating multiplicity and accepts that there will be many opinions and wants the philosopher to be open to any one that is probable. He is not demanding certainty, but requesting that the philosopher be open to many views and urges him to doubt each of them carefully before reaching a judgment. Exclusion of doctrines only comes after doubting, questioning, and examining difficulties, not before by rejecting topics out of hand. Pereira then quotes *Metaphysics* 3.1 in which Aristotle states that unless all the questions are resolved the philosopher cannot proceed further.

For these who want to have the faculty, it is worth taking the trouble to doubt well. For the resultant faculty is the resolution of those things that were previously doubted. For, those who ask, unless they first doubt, are like

those who are ignorant of what way they should go, and still cannot discover whether they have found what is being looked for or not. So, for the latter group, the end is not clear, but for the one who has doubted beforehand, the road lies open.

The passage ends with a quotation from *De Anima* 1.19, that the philosopher should reject those arguments that are not valid.<sup>14</sup>

Pereira sets up his history of Greek philosophy by first employing methodical doubt to untangle the facts of the chronology of the Greek philosophers. His study of chronology aims to prove that Greek philosophers had a discrete tradition that did not derive from either the religion of the Hebrews or the myths of the Egyptians. The second part, from chapter x–xii, was intended to argue against Simplicius's interpretation of *Physics* 1 that all the ancient philosophers agreed with each other over the creation of the world. To prove they disagreed, Pereira carefully studies how the Presocratics as well as Plato and Aristotle each defined prime matter in ways different from each other.

A glance at the different approach by his fellow Jesuit, Franciscus Toletus, published in 1573<sup>15</sup> will make it evident how differently he worked. Written in economical style, Toletus comments that Aristotle wrote about the views of the older philosophers but finds their explanations inadequate.

Melissus held there was one immobile principle but did not explain what it was; Parmenides held also there was one immobile principle but Aristotle did not indicate how it was different from Melissus.

Toletus implies they meant to say that one principle was matter.<sup>16</sup> Toletus ends the discussion there, giving no additional references and does not question whether the description of the world that Melissus and Parmenides described was impossible. Rather he writes this summary as if it had to be finished as quickly as possible.

Pereira gives the text of Aristotle's chapters 2–5 a critical reading, questioning each statement attributed to the philosophers by Aristotle or other authorities. Can the statement be true? Is it logical? Then he adds

<sup>14</sup> Pereira, *De communibus*, 187–88.

<sup>15</sup> Franciscus, Toletus, SJ, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in octo libros Aristotelis de physica auscultatione, nunc secundo in lucem edita* (Venezia: Juntas, 1593) lib. 1, cap. 2. 14–16.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. "eorum, qui unum posuerunt principium, Melissus unum infinitum, & immobile principium esse dixit, quod autem hec esse, non explicuit."



new information from several other Aristotle texts, made possible because he read Aristotle through Marco Antonio Zimara's editions of Averroes's commentary on Aristotle. Zimara annotates the text, adding *marginalia* so the reader might locate the topic in other texts of Aristotle.<sup>17</sup> Pereira also added quotations from Diogenes Laertius and newly translated Alexandrian commentaries on Aristotle, Simplicius's commentary on the *Physics* and Epictetus's *Enchiridion* (first translated by Poliziano), Philoponus's commentary on the *Physics* and references to Alexander of Aphrodisias's lost commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* quoted from the Simplicius's commentary. Subsequent books discussed the topics of matter, form, nature, cause, fortune, quality location, time and eternity. Various divisions of motion and the eternity of the world added to the *cornucopiae* of references. No wonder the work was so popular.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. *Piecing Together the Historical Parmenides*

Pereira's goal here is to destroy the link Ficino made between Pythagoras and Socrates. In his introduction to Plato's *Parmenides* Ficino tried to establish that Parmenides—student of Pythagoras—met Socrates, and to link Socrates to the *prisci theologi*, a tradition Pereira wrote in his *Praefatio* that was vain and superstitious.<sup>19</sup> Plato's dialogue sets the scene: in it the young Socrates meets the Pythagorean Parmenides, who was at that

<sup>17</sup> Many of these annotations ended up in one of the most popular philosophical dictionaries of the sixteenth century, Zimara's *Tabula*: Marco Antonio Zimara, *Tabula & Dilucidationes, in dicta Aristotelis & Averroes* (Venezia: Vincentius Valgrisius, 1564).

<sup>18</sup> Benito Pereira, *De communibus omnium rerum naturalium*, was printed 14 times between 1576 and its last printing in Germany 1645; Rome 1576, 1585; Venice 1586, 1591, 1618; Paris 1579, 1586; Lyon 1585, 1588; Cologne 1595, 1603, 1609, 1618. As a result of these many editions, nineteen copies of this Jesuit *Physics* text remain in UK academic libraries in addition to those held in the British Library. All the English of Pereira translations are mine.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Omnia Divini Platonis Opera tralatione Marsilii Ficini, emendatione et ad graecum codicem collatione Simonis Grynaei summa diligentia repurgata. Index quam copiosissimus praefixus est* (Lyons, 1548), 42–43. Ibid., 42: “Cum Plato per omnes eius dialogos totius sapientiae semina sparserit, in libris de Republ. cuncta moralis philosophiae instituta collegit, omnem naturalium rerum scientiam in Timaeo, universam in Parmenide complexus est theologiam: cumque in aliis longo intervallo caeteros philosophos antecesserit, in hoc tandem seipsum superasse videtur, & divinae mentis adytis intimoque philosophiae sacro caeleste hoc opus divinitus deprompsisse. . . . Hic enim diuus Plato de ipso uno subtilissime disputat, quemadmodum ipsum unum rerum omnium principium est, super omnia, omniaque ab illo. Quo pacto ipsum extra omnia sit, & in omnibus, omniaque ex illo, per illud, atque ad illud.”

time an old man. Zeno, the disciple of Parmenides, is present and unable to give a complete explanation of Parmenides's view of the relationship between "the one" and "the many" to Socrates. He says that the *unum* existed in sensible things, and if these were many, they could not share in the nature of the one. Ficino notes in his preface to the text that this view would result in errors. Plato writes that young Socrates in turn instructs the older Zeno about "the one" and "the unities that exist in intelligible things." Parmenides then appears and, while not contradicting Socrates, he completes the incomplete discussion by setting out "the entire rational theory of ideas." Thus both Plato and Ficino as a commentator establish a connection between Pythagoras (Parmenides's teacher), Parmenides, Socrates, and then Plato, Socrates's student.

Pereira determined to break that link between Pythagoras and Plato, questioning whether such a meeting could have taken place:

It does not escape my attention that some people think that that whole conversation of Socrates with Parmenides was manufactured by Plato against all chronological method and against the truth, and that Parmenides died before Socrates was born.<sup>20</sup>

He then sets out his own version of the correct chronology. If it were true that Socrates was born in 468 BC, it would have been possible for the conversation to have taken place because it would have happened, according to Plato, around 444 BC when Socrates would have been twenty-eight. But is it true? Pereira presents a complex calculation based on Olympiads, which I will spare the reader.<sup>21</sup> Whether Parmenides and Socrates met is still discussed today. In his edition of Plato's *Parmenides*, Leonardo Tarán<sup>22</sup> suggests that while what Plato writes is believable because it is found both in *Theaetetus* 183E and the *Sophist* 217C, it is possible that the meeting did take place but that the dialogue itself may not be accurate. It is doubtful

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<sup>20</sup> Pereira, *De communibus*, IV. 4. 135: "Non me latet quosdam arbitrari totum illum Socratis cum Parmenide sermonem, a Platone contra Cronographiae rationem & veritatem fuisse confictum, Parmenidemque ante Socratis ortum vita fuisse defunctum."

<sup>21</sup> Pereira, *De communibus*, IV.4, 135: "Sed de his opinetur quisque quod ei magis libuerit. Illud certe non ferendum quod ait Laertius, Parmenidem floruisse circa Olympiadem nonagesimanonam, cum proxime post, discipulum eius Melissum florentem faciat Olympiade octogesimaquarta. Socrates sane qui iuuenis erat sene iam Parmenide, obiit septuagenarius Olympiade nonagesimaquinta."

<sup>22</sup> See *Parmenides. A text with translations, commentary and critical essays*, edited by Leonardo Tarán (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 3–4.

whether, at that young age, Socrates would have had any theory of ideas as Plato implies in *Parmenides*.

### 5. *De-constructing and Reconstructing Parmenides's Philosophy*

The second half of the book discusses the principles of the prime matter of the Presocratics as well as Epicurus, Aristotle and Plato. Pereira makes the reader aware of how many sources of information are available: Plato, Aristotle, the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Physics 1*, *De generatione*, *De caelo* and *Metaphysics 1*, and Plutarch's *De placitis philosophorum*. He then lists the varieties of opinions among these ancient philosophers on the topic. Some write that there is only one principle and it is immobile, some a finite number, some an infinite number.<sup>23</sup> It is true Pereira is interested in disproving the statements by the Neoplatonists that the ancient philosophers all agreed about the first matter, but in truth he seems as interested, indeed delighted, to collect all the information he could from among the multitude of sources available to him about the doctrines of each philosopher.

A careful reading of Chapter 16<sup>24</sup> reveals that Pereira took great pains to set out a plausible explanation of Parmenides's seemingly impossible statement that the world was whole and without movement. He writes:

If Parmenides's opinion is such that Aristotle depicted it—there is no doubt that it is quite false and absurd. . . . Plato in the *Sophist* called Parmenides: Great, wise, with a sharp mind and teacher of Socrates he uses very fine argument in debating, and not only speaks his mind, but also is very difficult to understand.<sup>25</sup>

Pereira adds a personal touch, noting that anyone wanting to understand Parmenides had to be a "Deep Swimmer"<sup>26</sup> That the world is one and unmoved is unbelievable, Pereira exclaims, following Aristotle's view:

There can be no one so ensnared by the senses and the mind that he would dare to deny, contrary to all the evidence of reason and all the senses, that there is motion and plurality and things. . . . That opinion would not have belonged to a wise man, but to either a stupid man who did not understand

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<sup>23</sup> Pereira, *De communibus*, 219.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 257–60.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

what he was saying or the most cheeky sophist for the purpose of defending paradoxes of this kind and for striving after a vain praise and glory for himself, an idea which was not only difficult but also easy to refute.<sup>27</sup>

On reflection Pereira does not believe that these early philosophers could have been thinking of natural things, since when Xenophanes said that all was one, he meant the sky, or God; Parmenides might have meant the same thing, for Parmenides listened to Xenophanes.

At this point Pereira departs from Aristotle as an authority and refers to new information about Parmenides's philosophy in verses in Simplicius's commentary on *Physics* Book 1, text 31 and to the *Adversus calumniatorem Platonis*,<sup>28</sup> where Bessarion explained that the ancients thought *ens* was eternal, immutable and divine, but that in the end, *ens* converted itself to natural things, which generated in birth and death. Pereira notes that Parmenides calls these natural things false,<sup>29</sup> explaining that this is because Parmenides found that their mutability deceived the senses and led them into error. Pereira defends knowledge about the natural world based on the senses, and points out that not all philosophers called natural things false. He establishes, finally, that Parmenides placed the judgment of the truth not in the senses but in the mind alone. See Diogenes Laertius:

Let not *sensus communus* persuade you of anything,  
For example deceiving eye or the ear or the tongue,  
Do not let that indicate anything but let reason separate the distinctions in things.<sup>30</sup>

Pereira sums up by explaining that Parmenides made the two first principles sensible objects: fire or that which is hot, shiny, rare, and light, and earth, which is cold, dark, dense, and heavy,<sup>31</sup> but that when Parmenides spoke about *ens*, he was not describing something material, but some-

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., "sed uia nemo esse potest usque eo sensibus, & mente captus ut contra omnem rationis, omniumque sensuum evidentiam, negare audeat motum, & multitudinem esse in rebus."

<sup>28</sup> See: Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion, In calumniatorem in Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte* (Paderbornae Schönningh 1927), vol. VIII. This was first published in 1469, *Adversus calumniatorem Platonis*, Roma, Sweeneyheim & Pannartz. Pereira reference is to Book 11, chap. VII, "Falsum esse, quod adversaries dixit sentire Aristotelem, quo mundus ex non ente simpliciter sit productus sola die voluntate."

<sup>29</sup> Pereira, *De communibus*, 258.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 258. Pereira quotes from Diogenes Laertius, *De vitis dogmatis et apaphegmatis eorum qui in philosophia claruerent*, Parmenides, trans. H. Etienne (Paris, H. Etienne, 1570). 310.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Libri physicorum octo, cum singulorum Epitomatis hactenus non impressis: Averroesque eius exactiss. Interprete: Marco Antonio Zimara. variis exemplaribus tam felici-*

thing alien to physical things. Pereira ends by writing that those people were wrong who thought that by those words Parmenides had wanted to indicate prime matter. A more plausible interpretation might be the one found by Simplicius, in Book one of the *Physics*, in which Eudemus comments that when Parmenides calls *ens* whole and round, with both parts equidistant from the center, these descriptions correspond not to God but to the sky.

When Pereira tried to find out the correct meaning of the term, he attempted to gather fragments from other texts. He went on book after book, examining each topic, each source, each piece of information, testing it with methodical doubt. This sets a new standard for the discussion of philosophical doctrines. Although Pereira constantly praised Aristotle, his method resulted in the decline of the absolute authority of the Stagirate's text which, as we can see, was made possible because the translation and publication of Greek commentaries on Aristotle added new information. Simplicius's commentary on the *Physics* quoted extensively from Parmenides verses. It was first printed in 1544 and it was reprinted six times up to 1587.<sup>32</sup> It was very popular!

#### 6. *Being Grateful for Ancient Philosophers, Despite Their Errors*

But if the ancient philosophers are not correct should we read them? The title of chapter xx "The errors of the ancient philosophers are pointed out, but we should forgive and even give thanks for these"<sup>33</sup> sums up Pereira's critical but appreciative view of early philosophy. In this chapter he critically examines the concept of prime matter of all the philosophers from Parmenides to Plato. Although not a great fan of Plato he admits that only he and Democrates came close to giving a description. Plato deals with it

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*ter expolita sunt: ut hactenus nitidiora non proddicerit.* (Lyon: Scipion de Gabianus, 1520). fol. xxi. See Book 1, text 28 (chapter iii) for the commentary by Averroes.

<sup>32</sup> The Greek texts were printed: *De physica auscultatione*, October 1526, *De Caelo*, January 1527; *De anima*, July 1527. The definitive book on Gian Francesco D'Ascola and the Aldine press, is Annaclara Cataldi Palau, *Gian Francesco d'Asola e la tipografia aldina: la vita, le edizioni, la biblioteca dell'asolano* (Genoa: Sagep, 1998). Printed Latin translations: *Physics*: 1544, 1546 1551, 1558 (imperfect edition), 1565, 1566, 1587; *De caelo*: 1540, 1544, 1555, 1563, 1584; *De anima*: 1543, 1549, 1553, 1554, 1564, 1587 and the *Categories*: 1540, 1543, 1550, 1551, 1567, 1568, 1584. These figures are conjectural, based on a text search in the Karlsruhe Virtuelle Bibliothek.

<sup>33</sup> Pereira, *De communibus*, 271: "Universe indicantur errata veterum Philosophorum: quibus tamen ignoscere, quin etiam gratias agree oportet." From chapter I, Book II, *Metaphysics*.

in the *Timaeus*, but he was still in error, because when he has Socrates discuss it,<sup>34</sup> Socrates ends up denying that:

force and reason were places in natural substances that can be received by the sense.... the whole of form to certain separate substances which he himself calls ideas in the *Timaeus*.

Pereira does not agree with this view. Efficient cause was also a difficult topic. Anaxagoras traced the force and principle of efficient cause to the intellect, while Empedocles introduced two efficient causes, strife and friendship. Pereira notes, however, that this was incomplete as he does not show how what caused the strife or how it operated.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt Pereira finds them inadequate and their explanations nebulous. What's more, they did not know for what purpose nature made natural and artificial things. For Pereira the force that made that purpose was the Christian God, so the pagan philosophers will always be incomplete. He ends as he begins with a quote from *Metaphysics* 2:

It is only fair to be grateful not only to those whose views we can share but also to those who have expressed rather superficial opinions. They too have contributed something; by their preliminary work they have formed our mental experience.

### 7. Charron and Rewriting Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1

Two other historians of philosophy have contributed important and quite different interpretations of Charron from that of Popkin, although both still associate Charron with the skeptical tradition. Tullio Gregory in *Genèse de la raison classique de Charron à Descartes*<sup>36</sup> assigns Charron a place among the early participants in Enlightenment rationalism yet at the same time writes that Charron was practicing *La Sagesse sceptique*. Jose Neto points out in "Acquired Skepticism in the Seventeenth Century" that the Christian doctrine of the Fall and the implication that man could know little or nothing might provide part of the background to Charron's

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.: "Postea Socrates in huius pervestigationem studiose & diligenter incubuit, sed is vim & rationem formae negat positam esse in substantiis naturalibus, quae percipiuntur sensibus totamque attribuit substantiis quibusdam separatis, quas ipse vocat Ideas."

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>36</sup> Gregory, "Aristotélisme et libertinisme," 63–80.

philosophy and psychology—the view that only very few humans were capable of the type of necessary rationality; that they could neither know the natural world as it was in flux nor control their own emotions. This could cause a skepticism in the manner not of Sextus but of Augustine.

Charron's view of human nature fits into this mold. He is aware of man's *foiblesse* and his inability either to know the natural world or to control his own emotions. But the important point is that he does not completely give into man's weaknesses but directs the book to the able reader so that *crainte et foiblesse* can be if not conquered, then at least controlled. To redirect man's emotions and fears, Charron reworks certain phrases from Aristotle. We will examine here how he employs Aristotle to that end. *Metaphysics* 1.1. 980a states:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses: for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight.

Montaigne, whom of course Charron knew and read, challenged Aristotle's positive view about the possibility of knowing and opened the last chapter of his *Essais* with his own version. He directed the thinker away from an enthusiastic examination of the external world and with it the accumulation of knowledge by experience, and towards the question of whether judgment in the arts and sciences could be based on experience, because reason was not reliable and had so many different forms.

No desire is more natural than the desire for knowledge. We assay all the means that can lead us to it. When reason fails us we make use of experience. . . . Experience is a weaker and less dignified means; . . . Reason has so many forms that we do not know which to resort to: experience has no fewer.<sup>37</sup>

Charron's philosophy has often been judged but a weak shadow of Montaigne. An interesting difference becomes evident in Charron's version of *Metaphysics* 1, which he quotes in the opening lines of Chapter 1 of *De la Sagesse*. For him the impulse to know comes not from himself, but the outside world: God, nature and wise men, they enjoin him to study and know eternal God; to contemplate and know himself. But there are constraints: the external world leads one's attention elsewhere, but if a man is

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<sup>37</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *On experience*, in *The complete essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 1207.

bound to study and know himself, it is natural for him to weigh different views, he can become close to himself and self-knowledge.

Dieu, nature, les sages, et tout le monde presche l'homme et l'exhorte de faict et de parole a s'estudier et cognoistre Dieu éternellement et sans cesse se regarde, se considère et se cognoistre. Le monde a toutes ses veues contrainctes au dedans, & ses yeux ouuverts a se voir & regarder. Autant est oblige et tenu l'homme s'estudier et cognoistre, comme il luy est naturel de penser et il est proche a soy-mesme. Nature taille a tous ceste besongne. Le mediter & entretenir ses pensées est chose sur toutes facile, ordinaire, naturelle la pasture, l'entretien, la vie de l'esprit, cuius vivere est cognitare.<sup>38</sup>

What can this fallen man know who is so racked with the conflicting passions of will, love, ambition, avarice, carnal love, cupidity, anger, and envy? Charron would not have man give up, but rather he gives directions about how to avoid the errors of the world and attain "universelle cognoissance & plaine liberte d'esprit".<sup>39</sup> This *universelle cognoissance* could not include everything in the universe, so a person who sought it would be extremely stupid (*sot*).<sup>40</sup>

#### 8. Charron's Version of *Metaphysics* 3.1

In *Metaphysics* 3.1, Aristotle directed the philosopher how to think. Pereira turned the formula into a method for examining doctrines in past and present philosophy. Charron turned his attention to the personal emotional life of the philosopher and set out a formula designed to regulate the ups and downs of the emotional and intellectual life of the fallen man. In Book 1, chapter forty-four, Charron incorporates methodical doubt into the persona of the philosopher who then personally questions points of doctrine, human emotion and structures of government.

The key to understanding how Charron uses methodical doubt is to realize that he so paraphrases *Metaphysics* 3.1 that it sets out instructions for the philosopher's quest. Charron first locates what kind of man can be a philosopher-sage. In chapter forty-three, Book one: "Seconde distinction et difference plus subtile des esprits et suffisances des hommes," all mankind is placed in three general classifications: 1) their *diverse assiette du*

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Charron *De la Sagesse, livres trois* (Bordeaux: Simon Millargen, 1601) book 1, chapter 1, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., *Livre second contenant les instructions & regles generales de Sagesse*, 309–25.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 2: "Et toi homme qui veux embrasser l'univers, tout cognoistre? & juger, ne te cognois and n'y estudies? . . . tu demeures le seul sot au monde."



*monde*,<sup>41</sup> 2) the *esprit* of men, and 3) a person's position in society.<sup>42</sup> The philosopher-sage is in classification two.

This classification<sup>43</sup> is split in turn into three: the lowest has an *esprit, foible et plat*, and is of little capacity, while the second type claims to have knowledge, but has mediocre judgment (“ne se iugent pas asses arrestent a ce qu'on tient communément”). He wants to know what is not permitted (“voire pensent qu'il ne l'est pas permis”). This subservient person chooses what the crowd accepts; in philosophy he would be a contemporary Aristotelian like everyone else or a local government official.<sup>44</sup> The third type of man, the type from which the sage-philosopher comes is quite unique.<sup>45</sup> He is a man of an *esprit vif et clair, ferme* and capable of solid judgments. He does not accept received opinion or seek the applause of the crowd, rather he examines everything that is proposed.<sup>46</sup> This is a statement very like Topics 1 in Pereira text. Then moving into *Metaphysics* 3.1, Charron has his philosopher dispassionately examine all the causes and motives and take his investigation to their source; he would rather doubt and hold his belief in suspense than make too hasty a choice.<sup>47</sup>

Charron thus replaces the objective logic that has analyzed the physics with a method based on methodical doubt so he can deconstruct the details of a personal emotional and philosophical world and construct a physiological world for the aspiring philosopher. The philosopher himself becomes a *persona*, the conduit through whom thought and emotions are directed and who finds the answers himself.

### 9. Aristotelian Doubt vs. Aristotelian Reason

The first edition (1601) of *De la Sagesse* was fiercely attacked and so Charron wrote *Le Petit traicte de Sagesse*<sup>48</sup> to defend himself. In the process

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 241–44. That is their geographical location in the world.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 209–12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., “Cette distinction qui regarde l'esprit et la suffisance, n'est si apparente et vient tant du naturel que de l'acquie.” 201.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 206–07.

<sup>46</sup> See Topics 1, see Pereira's use of it n. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>48</sup> Pierre Charron, *Petit traicte de Sagesse*, in *De la Sage[sse] trois liures. . . . Ausquels est adiousté un recueil des lieux & chapitres suivant la première édition de Bordeaux 1601. . . . Plus vn petit traicté*, (Paris: L. Feugé, 1646).

he summarized his work, and elaborated on his technique of doubt, his strict rationality against those who are offended because they thought the work's views were too strong and allowed too much freedom,

The human must take on challenging propositions—it is a great weakness to be astonished at anything, find anything strange in the world—he must strengthen himself to know, judge all thoughts.... But do they say that doubting, weighing, deferring is painful? Yes to fools but not to wise men.<sup>49</sup>

Charron delights I doubt. Could it be that doubt, used as a tool, gives the philosopher-sage permission to use his initiative and judgment? He rejects subjects that cannot be known or that do not affect man: debates about the sovereign good and first causes in *Metaphysics*, the type of Ethics engaged in by *Thomisti*—for they are neither interested in their own virtue or that of others—and austere and fearful theologians who speculate about divine understanding.<sup>50</sup>

Charron proposes a philosophy he calls gay, free, and joyous, yet strong noble generous and rare. He looks to the sayings of the philosophers and the virtuous men not their logic, listing Thales, Solon, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aristippus, Zeno, Antisthenes and their disciplines, and to Aristides, Pericles, Alexander, Cato, Scipio, and so on. Claiming not to be a follower of one man, but one who selects from many, he set out to create an unhistorical tradition for his philosophy.<sup>51</sup>

In chapter two of *Aristotélisme et libertinisme*, Gregory contrasts skepticism with rational Aristotelianism, observing that certain Aristotelian traditions were thought to have a kind of rationality. Even the libertine French doctor, Guy Pantin, wrote that if he had to choose from all the ancient sects he would chose Aristotle:

Si j'avois a choisir de toutes les Sectes des anciens Philosophes, et que je fusse obligé de me déclarer; je prendrois celle d'Aristote qui a fait les Péripatéticiens. Ce sont les plus honnêtes gens, qui ont le plus approche de la vertu & qui ne se sont pas arrêtez a des sottise comme les autres... ils font

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<sup>49</sup> Gregory, 139, *Petit traicte*, "Mais dist-ils, douter, balancer, surseoir, est ce pas ester en peine? Ouy aux fols, non aux sages; ouy, dis-je, a gens qui ne peuvent vivre libre esprits presomptueux." 223–24.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., *Preface*, xiii, xv.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

profession de savoir tout ce que l'esprit humain peut comprendre naturellement, sans y mêler de révélation.<sup>52</sup>

The fact is that Charron places Fallen Man in a Fallen World, then equips him with a book to mitigate the distress. These two Aristotelian formulae, which he reworks, help the philosopher-sage purge stupidity, unnecessary fear and superstition to give him space to suspend judgment. But this suspense is but a pause, he does not have to give up the *procès* of judging, but can bide his time, before choosing which view to take. This balancing between doubt and judgment allows the philosopher-sage to gain personal control over a physical and emotional world in flux.

### 10. Conclusion

This paper has maintained that *Metaphysics* 3.1, as transformed through the sixteenth-century commentary tradition, became a text employed to deconstruct details of argument and vocabulary. I do not assert that the people employing it accepted the contents of the entire Aristotelian encyclopedia, far from it. Pereira for example was more of a fan of Philoponus than of Aristotle. Rather these men were educated using one of the various traditions that grew from knowledge of Aristotle's text, and like Guy Patin used those techniques that suited their purpose. In this case methodical doubt gave them the freedom to begin the process of changing the philosopher and the history of which he was a part.

If the development of the history of philosophy as a genre had depended on philosophers like Charron, it would have had no history. He wanted a store of the philosophers' wisdom gathered as deconstructed sayings, possibly by topic, which he could quote for his own use. By excluding *Metaphysics* and theology as well as most of natural philosophy from his philosophy and sticking to ethics, his topics could be timeless. What he did do was free philosophy from its purely Aristotelian context. By demanding a *liberte d'esprit* for the philosopher and creating the character of a strong *persona*, he gave the philosopher flexibility. Joseph Glanvill adopted such a *persona* in his *Scepsis scientifica*. While Glanvill concluded his work with praise of Charron, unlike the latter, who rejected the imperfect knowledge

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 66, Guy Patin 1602–72 *Naudatana et Patiniana ou singularitez remarquables prise des conversations de Mess. Naude et Patin*, Amsterdam, François van der Plaats, 1703, 2nd ed. 122–23.

of the natural world and withdrew into a personal philosophy, Glanvill accepted the fact that knowledge about the natural world was far from perfect. Glanvill, a voluntary skeptic, according to the definition of Maia Neto, still accepted that man was fallen. Therefore what he could know. I would suggest that he was employing methodical doubt or *sagesse skeptique*. That however is a different paper.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis Scientifica: or, confess ignorance, the way to science, in an essay on the vanity of dogmatizing* (London, Eversdem, 1665).

## CARTESIANISM AND HISTORY: FROM A REJECTION OF THE PAST TO A “CRITICAL” HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Gregorio Piaia

The transmission, reconstruction, and interpretation of the philosophies of the past are a particular, but not irrelevant aspect of the wider concept of *translatio studii*. In the pages that follow I would like to call attention to a number of decisive moments of transition in the genesis of modern philosophical historiography, as it took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this process an essential role was taken by the complex play of action and reaction between material on the history of philosophy, which had been handed down from antiquity and the affirmation of Descartes’s *nouvelle philosophie* with its claim to start from scratch, hence denying the very idea of a *translatio studii*. Thus were born the first forms of a historicization of philosophy’s past, leading to the creation of an outline of a “critical history” that placed itself as a synthesis between the erudite historiography of the seventeenth century—inheritance of the Renaissance—and the *esprit critique* professed by Descartes.

For conversing with those of another age is more or less the same thing as traveling. It is good to know something of the customs of different peoples in order to be able to judge our own more securely, and to prevent ourselves from thinking that everything not in accordance with our own customs is ridiculous and irrational, as those who have seen nothing of the world are in the habit of doing. On the other hand, when we spend too much time traveling, we end up becoming strangers in our own country; and when we immerse ourselves too deeply in the practices of bygone ages, we usually remain woefully ignorant of the practices of our own time.<sup>1</sup>

This famous comparison from the *Discours de la méthode* does not only have an autobiographical meaning, but serves as a symbolic counterpart to another famous work, the letter that Niccolò Machiavelli wrote to

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<sup>1</sup> René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Ian Maclean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Part One, 8. See René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: Vrin, 1962), 6.

Francesco Vettori on December 10, 1513. Machiavelli, banished from all political activity and forced to live in solitude in the countryside, wrote to Vettori:

When evening comes, I return home and enter my study. On the threshold I doff those everyday clothes of mine, all mud and filth, and don royal and courtly robes. Thus decently attired, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, lovingly received by them, I nourish myself with the food that alone is mine and that I was born for. And I am not ashamed to talk to them and to enquire after the reasons of their actions. And they, out of their affability, answer me...<sup>2</sup>

Machiavelli's forced solitude was certainly different from the tranquil solitude in which Descartes chose to live. But despite their different personal circumstances, the two passages I have quoted seem to me to be an emblematic expression of the transition from the climate of Humanism to that of the new science and the new philosophy, which was founded on a model taken from mathematics, and no longer on "histories" and "conversations" with the ancients. Yet only a few lines earlier, Descartes had placed himself on the same wavelength as Machiavelli, noting that:

Reading good books is like engaging in conversation with the most cultivated minds of past centuries who had composed them, or rather, taking part in a well-conducted dialogue in which such minds reveal to us only the best of their thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

This is not merely a benevolent concession to Descartes's old teachers at La Flèche, because the theme comes up again ten years later in the preface to the French translation of the *Principia philosophiae*: among the four ways of acquiring "wisdom" we also find at the end, though almost as an addition, "reading, not of all books, but in particular of those which have been written by people capable of giving us sound instruction, as it is a sort of conversation which we have with the authors."<sup>4</sup> It is an indication that the easy cliché of the pure "mathematician and philosopher" does not

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<sup>2</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince. Letter to Francesco Vettori, December 10, 1513*...ed. by Mario Casella, translated by Aldo Ricci (Roma-Milano: Libreria del Littorio-Libreria d'Italia, 1930), 123–24.

<sup>3</sup> Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, 7–8. See *Discours de la méthode*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Les principes de la philosophie* de René Descartes, "Lettre de l'Auteur à celui qui a traduit le livre," AT.IX.5. See also, in the pages that follow, the brief historical outline of the "first cause and true principles," with reference to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Sceptics, and the "Sensists" (Epicurus).

fully describe Descartes's cultural personality, which was certainly critical of humanistic culture, but which was also profoundly influenced by it.

Descartes's anti-historical attitude is in any case the most evident fact: in effect, his interests seem far removed from that great seventeenth-century erudition, symbolized by the overflowing library and the *Wunderkammer*, the "chamber of curiosities," next to it, where antiques jostle for space with finds brought back from travels in far-off exotic lands. *Étranger en son pays*, a stranger in his own land: this is the paradoxical and alienating condition of he who devotes too much time to languages and the books of the ancients, when—and here we find an outline of the philosophical version of the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*—"our age seemed to me to be as flourishing as any preceding age, and to abound in as many great minds."<sup>5</sup> It is true that the history books of the ancients can help to "form the capacity of judgment"; yet they often contain fabulous elements, and even the most faithful editions mostly omit:

The humblest and least illustrious historical circumstances, with the result that what remains does not appear as it really was, and that those who base their behavior on the examples they draw from such accounts are likely to try to match the feats of knights of old in tales of chivalry and set themselves targets beyond their powers.<sup>6</sup>

We do not know whether Descartes knew *Don Quixote*, the second part of which came out in 1615, but these echoes between the two create a significant bridge between the first great novel of the modern age and the work which is traditionally placed at the beginning of modern philosophy: both involve a conscious distancing, whether ironic or critical, from the past which was presented by literature and by historiography as something noble and exemplary. In any case, Descartes's criticisms of the historiography of his time, which was often animated by a celebratory intent, hit the mark. Nor is it possible to say, as far as the philosophical past is concerned, that he was himself devoid of knowledge, since he declared that he knew "about the differences of opinion that have always existed among the most learned." Indeed, quoting Cicero (*De divinatione*, II, 58, 119), he states that he had "already discovered at school that there is no opinion so bizarre and incredible that has not been uttered by some philosopher or other."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, 7. See *Discours de la méthode*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8–9. See *Discours de la méthode*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Part Two, 15. See *Discours de la méthode*, 16.

In a note on this passage Gilson observes that the same saying had been quoted by Montaigne, in his *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*, concerning the “so many faces” of philosophy, in which “the fantasie of man” has expressed itself at length, for good and for bad.<sup>8</sup> It is an appropriate reference because Descartes’s subsequent statements also remind us of Montaigne: the reflections on the so-called “barbarians or savages” (who can in reality reason better than us), on the influence of the environment in which we grow up, and on the variety of clothing fashions, in such a way that when we act and judge we are guided not by “certain knowledge,” but rather by “custom and example.” In this way, concludes Descartes, as it is not possible to “choose any one person whose opinions struck me as preferable to those of another . . . I found myself forced, as it were, to provide for myself my own guidance.”<sup>9</sup> It is a solution which is in line with Montaigne, but with the difference—something of no small account—that Montaigne limited himself to the moral sphere, while Descartes (leaving aside the varied and contrasting mass of “opinions” that he had come across in his travels among books and men, in historical time and geographical space, that is) aims decisively at a single principle of knowledge on which to construct, with a rigorous method, an edifice which is entirely new and geometrically harmonious.

There is in Descartes, therefore, an opposition between “truth” (i.e. the realm of clear and distinct ideas) and “history,” which presents us with a mass of opinions, distinct from one another and devoid of clear links. In as far as it is founded on a rigorous method, the exercise of philosophy is clearly detached from the historical knowledge of the ancient philosophers. “We will never manage to become philosophers,” he noted in his *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, III (1627–28), “if, having read all the arguments of Plato and Aristotle, but without being able to make a sure judgment on the arguments put forward, in truth we show that we have not learnt the sciences, but we have learnt history.”<sup>10</sup> It is the same opposition between philosophy (or science) and history which we can see in the other protagonists of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution: in Bacon, with his well-known distinction between reason, memory, and imagination; in Galileo, who controversially contrasts the true philoso-

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<sup>8</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, 178. See Montaigne, *Essays*, translated by John Florio (New York: Dent, 1980), 2: 256.

<sup>9</sup> *A Discourse on the Method*, Part Two, 16. See *Discours de la méthode*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> AT.X.367.



phers with the “historians or doctors of memory”;<sup>11</sup> and in Pascal, who in the preface to his *Traité sur le vide* (1647) condemns the excessive respect paid to the past and distinguishes between two types of science: “some depend only on the memory and are purely historical: indeed their aim is to know what authors have written; others depend only on reasoning and have as their object the search for and discovery of hidden truths. Those of the first type are limited, as are the books in which they are contained,” while the latter are destined to progress, since reason is “incessantly productive and its inventions can be infinite and unceasing.”<sup>12</sup>

This sort of *Leitmotiv* of the new European culture is naturally present in Descartes’s followers and successors. The opposition between “truth” and “history” (which Hegel was also to emphasize, resolving them however in the strong concept of *Entwicklung* and in the dialectic coincidence of philosophy and history) is indeed more radical in Malebranche, who in turn places true philosophy or the *science de l’esprit* in opposition to the *science de mémoire* of those who attempt to interpret the doctrines of Plato or Aristotle correctly. Indeed these latter “know nothing but historical facts and not evident truths, and they are historians rather than true philosophers, men who do not think at all but who are able to recount the thoughts of others.” Historical work, therefore, is considered to be superfluous with respect to the necessity and the possibility of grasping with reason that which is true in itself and that which, as such, can be unproblematically separated from all bio-bibliographical or philological aspects:

It seems to me that it is pretty useless, for those who live in the present, to know that there was once a man called Aristotle, whether this man [effectively] wrote the books that bear his name, and whether he means a certain thing or something else in a certain passage from his works; this cannot make a man either wiser or happier, but it is very important to know whether what he says is in itself true or false. Hence it is useless to know

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<sup>11</sup> Galileo Galilei, *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo*, a cura di Francesco Flora (Milano: BUR, 1959), 151. We find the same theme reappear, sixty years later, in the Sicilian Michelangelo Fardella, who was subsequently the first to introduce Cartesian philosophy into the University of Padua: he defines as “more historians than philosophers” (*potius Historici quam Philosophi*) those who, “neglecting the use of their own reason, find pleasure in studying and observing nature with the mind of others and the eyes of others” (Michelangelo Fardella, *Universae philosophiae sistema: In quo nova quadam, et extricata methodo, naturalis scientiae, et morales fundamenta explanantur* (Venetiis: apud H. Albritium, 1691), 14).

<sup>12</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 529–30.

what Aristotle believed regarding the immortality of the soul, even though it is very useful to know that the soul is immortal.<sup>13</sup>

A canny observer might note at this point that we have enough here to declare the failure of the history of philosophy as a discipline, to close up shop and send all its scholars home, as workers in an irredeemably obsolete sector . . . But the resources of “historical reason” are considerable: by one of the paradoxes which make up the history of ideas, the credit for having given a new form and a new life to that *historia philosophica*, which had developed into a literary genre in its own right over the course of the seventeenth century, can go precisely to anti-historical Cartesian philosophy. In effect, if reference to the past initially seems useless, and indeed misleading, with respect to the research that anyone can do on their own by starting from their own self-consciousness, the acquired awareness of the novelty and the excellence of the Cartesian method, and hence of the radical break with the past, ends up by setting into motion a process of historicization: Descartes is placed at the *beginning* of a new age, and this periodization leads to a comparison with the philosophy of *yesterday*, which becomes the object of a critical reconstruction, and to a celebration of a *today* which, thanks to the nascent idea of progress, allows us to glimpse the outlines of a *tomorrow*. What is more, the method and the very *esprit* of Cartesian philosophy, with its criticism of the philosophical sects in the name of the *libertas philosophandi* and with its aspiration to be systematic, introduce a strongly theoretical aspect to a historiographical vision and practice, whose co-ordinates had up to then been provided by the erudition and philology of Renaissance humanism, which in turn had been inspired by the models found in ancient biography and doxography. Let us now look at some of the most representative episodes in this process, a process which is of capital importance for the birth of modern philosophical historiography, and which took place well before Hegel *pace* the neo-Hegelians.<sup>14</sup>

It must be noted in the first place that the prejudices held by the greatest French thinkers of the seventeenth century towards the study of the past were not shared by all of their followers. This is true of the Oratorian Bernard Lamy, a Cartesian and close friend of Malebranche, who rec-

<sup>13</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité* (Paris: Vrin, 1991<sup>3</sup>), 1: 285, 290.

<sup>14</sup> For a more lengthy and detailed treatment, see Vol. II (*From the Cartesian Age to Brucker*. English edition by Gregorio Piaia) of the work *Models of the History of Philosophy*, ed. by Giovanni Santinello (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Springer, 2011).

ognized the validity of a historical approach to philosophy, on a didactic plane at least. In the section of his *Entretiens sur les sciences* (1684) devoted to the philosophers, Lamy takes up Malebranche's distinction between philosophy, based on the reason which each person possesses, and history, based on authority and books, which are mostly "an obstacle to true science, because they are badly written or because they are not read as they should be." Immediately afterwards, however, he observes realistically that books are not useless, but can serve as a guide for those who begin to study philosophy:

Since for every two or three people who, having rid themselves of all the opinions they had learnt elsewhere and having given up books, have successfully reached the truth in the deepest levels of their own being, there is an infinite number of those who, having insisted on walking without a guide, have lost their way and have succumbed to a thousand reveries.<sup>15</sup>

Those who study in the universities and are not able to use their reason correctly should therefore use their memory: "it is useful not to ignore the History of Philosophy, that is to say, who the illustrious philosophers were and what their doctrine was."<sup>16</sup> The corporation of historians of philosophy can breathe a sigh of relief at this, since it recognizes the consoling (but not very exciting) possibility of being called on to serve in the lower ranks, with an exclusively didactic and propaedeutic role (the teaching of the history of philosophy as a kind of surrogate for those who are not able to practice philosophy on their own). Yet there is a decisive turning point in the Cartesian attitude towards the past a few years later, when the Dutch editors judged it appropriate to add a brief "discourse on ancient and modern philosophy" to the third edition of the Cartesian *summa* by Pierre-Sylvain Régis: *Cours entier de philosophie, ou système général selon les principes de M. Descartes, contenant la logique, la métaphysique, la physique, et la morale. Dernière édition, enrichie d'un très grand nombre de figures, et augmentée d'un Discours sur l'histoire de la philosophie ancienne et moderne, où l'on fait en abrégé l'histoire de cette science* (Amsterdam, 1691).

The first edition of the work (with quite a different title) dates back to merely a year earlier (1690), a clear sign of the work's success with a public which was open to Cartesian novelty. But in the course of the seventeenth century, Dutch culture had also developed a specific interest in the history

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<sup>15</sup> Bernard Lamy, *Entretiens sur les sciences* (Paris: PUF, 1966), 237.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

of philosophy, in particular with the *Historiae philosophicae libri VII* (1655) by Georg Horn, the *De philosophorum sectis* (1657) by Johannes Gerhard Vossius, and the *Historia philosophica* (1674) by Abraham de Graau.<sup>17</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that confronted with the success of Régis's work, the editors thought to add a historical introduction to it, as had been done to a number of philosophy textbooks in Latin written for schools, such as the *Cursus Conimbricensis*. This does not mean giving in to tradition, however, since the *Discours sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne* (which came out anonymously but was written by the Calvinist *émigré* Pierre Coste, future friend and translator of John Locke) was characterized by its clear and provocative Cartesian approach, subverting the canons of humanist historiography and taking up a clear position in the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, namely, in the dispute between the Peripatetics and the proponents of the *nouvelle philosophie*. In a veiled polemic with the *Réflexions sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne, et sur l'usage qu'on en doit faire pour la religion* (1676) by the Jesuit René Rapin, admirer of the ancients and follower of Aristotle, the author of the *Discours* (Pierre Coste) in fact contests the alleged superiority of the *anciens*. This is true for philosophy above all:

Since it is a science that depends on the precision of reasoning, which is not perfected all at once, and which is made up of an infinite number of intuitions and is aided by the experiences which chance commonly produces and does not lead to deliberately, it is obvious that the first philosophers must have left many things to do for those who come after them.<sup>18</sup>

This sense of the progressive development of the human sciences leads Pierre Coste to state that philosophy is today “at the highest degree of perfection,” and this thanks to the use of a different *method*, based on reason and not on authority. Modern philosophers are distinguished by their “new way of philosophizing” (*nouvelle manière de philosopher*), and indeed Descartes “had discovered more truths than had been discovered in all the previous centuries.”<sup>19</sup> It is precisely the method or the *manière de raisonner* which constitutes the first of the three criteria of judgment

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<sup>17</sup> See Giovanni Santinello (ed.), *Models of the History of Philosophy: From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the Historia Philosophica*, english edition by Constance W.T. Blackwell and Philip Weller (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer, 1993), 205–78.

<sup>18</sup> [Pierre Coste], *Discours sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne*, in Pierre-Sylvain Régis, *Cours entier de philosophie...* (Amsterdam: Huguëtan, 1691; repr. New York-London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), [2].

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, [36]–[37].

on which Coste bases his *comparaison* between ancient and modern philosophy (the other two are the degree of extension of “particular” knowledge, relating that is to physics, and the availability of scientific instruments):

As far as the means of reasoning are concerned, in the first place, modern philosophers visibly surpass the ancients, since while the latter mostly only reasoned on vague ideas and very confused principles, the former make the point of reasoning on clear and distinct ideas, and move from simple things which are easy to understand to those which are composite and known less. Even if Descartes's philosophy had only served to introduce this new method of reasoning it would have been more worthy of respect than the whole of ancient philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

This last consideration is worth stressing, because it denotes an attempt to historicize the position and the role of Descartes. The price to be paid is certainly high (the unconditioned surrender of all ancient philosophy, Aristotle included, to the moderns), but it is in this way that *historia philosophica*, which seemed destined to be confined to the arid lands of erudition, acquires the rights to citizenship in the young and expanding realm of the *nouvelle philosophie*.

Another contribution in this sense, on a much more substantial theoretical level than the youthful (and journalistic) *Discours* by Pierre Coste, came from one of the greatest concrete examples of the Cartesian spirit and method, that *Logique de Port-Royal ou Art de penser* by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole which enjoyed enormous success throughout Europe and profoundly influenced the subsequent development of logic and epistemology. It might seem strange that such a work should also have influenced the way of understanding the history of philosophy, which with its extreme variety of opinions is diametrically opposed to linear logical discourse; but the history of ideas—as we have seen—takes roads that are sometimes unthinkable, or at least unexpected. In this case it is the recognition of a truth of history alongside the truths of reason and faith, clearly expressed in the last part of the *Art de penser*,<sup>21</sup> which offers the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., [44].

<sup>21</sup> Antoine Arnauld-Pierre Nicole, *La logique ou l'Art de penser* (Paris: PUF, 1965), 336: “And nevertheless . . . there are things that we only know through human faith and which we must hold as certain and indubitable as if we had mathematical demonstrations of them. . . . Someone would have lost their reason to doubt that Caesar, Pompey, Cicero, and Virgil ever existed or were not characters of fantasy, like those of Amadis,” and here the reference to Amadis of Gaul, the protagonist of a famous Spanish novel of chivalry, brings us back to Descartes's reference to the “extravagances of the paladins of our novels.”

theoretical basis for a true epistemological foundation to historical knowledge, and hence to the history of philosophy. This is what was achieved by Pierre Bayle, who can rightly be considered to adhere to Cartesianism, albeit with eclectic tendencies and his well-known skeptical leanings (a "minor Cartesian," as Elisabeth Labrousse was to define him).<sup>22</sup>

In the final pages of the *Projet et fragmens d'un Dictionnaire critique* (Rotterdam, 1692), aimed at preparing the way for the first edition of the monumental *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), Bayle argues the validity and autonomy of historical knowledge, attributing the truths of fact with their own degree of certainty, superior even to that of the truths of a mathematical nature. It is worth quoting this outline of historiographical theory in full, because it signals the end of Cartesian prejudice against history and the extension to history of the principle of evidence, removed from its initial, purely geometrical and metaphysical, context:

If you say to me that the most abstract theorems of algebra are very useful in life because they make the human mind more suitable to perfect certain arts, I will reply that scrupulous research into all the facts of history is capable of producing enormous good.... It will be objected perhaps that in mathematics even that which appears most abstract and fruitless has at least the advantage of leading us to indubitable truths, while historical discussions and research concerning human facts, besides leaving us in the dark, are seeds of new discord. But he who affirms these things shows a great lack of prudence. I maintain that historical truths can be brought to a degree of certainty even more indubitable than that which is reached by geometric truths; let it be understood, as long as we consider these two types of truths according to the degree of certainty which is proper to them. Let me explain myself. In the disputes which arise among historians to know whether a certain prince ruled before or after another, both sides suppose that one fact has all the reality and the existence of which it is capable outside our intellect, as long as it is not of the nature of those which are related by Ariosto or by other narrators of fantasy, and they take no account of the difficulties which the Pyrrhonians use to make us doubt whether the things that seem to us to exist really exist outside our own thought. Thus a historical fact reaches the highest degree of certainty which it is capable of as soon as we have verified its apparent existence: we do not require anything else for this sort of truth.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1963–64), 2: 41–44.

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Amsterdam: Brunel, 1740; repr. Genève: Slatkine, 1995), 4: 613.

This general concept of historical knowledge is also significantly applied to the context of the history of philosophy (in Bayle's *Dictionnaire* there are 104 articles, often very lengthy and full of reflections, devoted to ancient and modern philosophers). This is true of the article on Epicurus, where, after quoting a passage from the *De finibus* in which Cicero emphasizes the positive aspect of the bond of friendship between the Epicureans, Bayle takes the opportunity to go back to the famous theme of the "virtuous atheist." He counters those who were used to presenting the Epicureans as good-for-nothings, and who based their opinion on the Epicureans' theories of providence and pleasure, by referring to the primacy of the truth of fact: "Are all these nice doctrines not confuted perhaps by that single passage from Cicero? Does a *truth of fact*, such as that which Cicero has brought to us, perhaps not overturn a hundred volumes of speculative reasoning?"<sup>24</sup>

Given a new foundation on the basis of the full epistemic validity of the "truth of fact," the study of philosophy's past becomes, therefore—by the very nature of its subject matter—the privileged field for analysis and judgment, where the critical potential of the Cartesian method can be fully applied. As Cassirer has noted, Bayle certainly does not have a progressive and teleological vision of the history of philosophy, which is for him instead a "knowledge of the details [which] does not add up to an understanding of the whole; on the contrary, it destroys all hope of ever attaining such understanding."<sup>25</sup> But Bayle's exasperated and at times despairing investigation into a bio-bibliographical fact or a doctrinal theme, in the name of an internal coherence both of the historical facts and the philosophical and theological ideas, can also be traced back to the rigor and lucidity of Descartes, further sharpened by his familiarity with historical Pyrrhonism. And it is from the lesson on method imparted by the "historical and *critical* Dictionary" that we have the development of that *histoire critique* (also called *raisonnée* or *philosophique*) that brought a profound renewal to the historiographical tradition, also and above all in the field of philosophy: it is no longer the simple registration of fact, but rather analysis and judgment (*jugement, iudicium*), and hence is open to indicating mistakes, in such a way that the term *critique*, which traditionally referred to the *ars critica*, that is to philology, comes to

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2: 365a (art. *Epicure*, rem. D).

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 203–04.



take on a meaning which is still valid today of rational and philosophical "criticism."

*Histoire critique de la philosophie*: this is the title that André-François Boureau-Deslandes, who in his youth had sympathized with the doctrines of Malebranche, was to give to his work (1737). It is a work in which the *Leitmotiv* of the opposition between historians and philosophers comes to be applied within historiography itself. "Among writers of Philosophical History," he notes in an *Eclaircissement* at the beginning of the work:

Some have worked without choice, without discernment, more like compilers who collect than censors who judge. They have reported the thoughts of others, and they have not cared enough to think themselves.... In effect, to what avail can it be to display to the eyes of the public the dogmas of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus, if one cannot at the same time discover what is praiseworthy or reprehensible in these doctrines, if we cannot penetrate the reasons which gave rise to them, the illusions which they can create in the mind, and the surprises which they give to the heart?<sup>26</sup>

(And here we must note the stress which Boureau-Deslandes, like so many other eighteenth-century writers, placed on "sensibility" and *raisons du coeur*, which, as for Pascal, came to be placed alongside the reasons of the mind).

This is the direction taken, but with a much more systematic approach, by the massive *Historia critica philosophiae* (1742–44) by Johann Jacob Brucker, the greatest work on the history of philosophy of the early eighteenth century, a work which Victor Cousin considered to be the last and most mature expression of Cartesianism.<sup>27</sup> It is a judgment which is a little too schematic, since Brucker, a pupil of Buddeus, professed himself to be an eclectic, and for him the central figure of modern thought was if anything Leibniz, and not Descartes.<sup>28</sup> It is true, however, that without the contribution of Cartesian rationalism the evolution towards a "critical" history of philosophy would not have taken place. In brief, Descartes established the possibility of the rigorous exercise of philosophy at the price of history; in reality, in the medium term, his rejection of the past did not lead to the end of historiography as a cultural practice

<sup>26</sup> André-François Boureau-Deslandes, *Histoire critique de la philosophie*... III<sup>e</sup> éd. (Amsterdam: F. Changuion, 1756), 2: xvii–xviii.

<sup>27</sup> Victor Cousin, *Cours de philosophie. Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie* [1828] (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 312–16.

<sup>28</sup> See Johann Jacob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*... (Lipsiae: B.C. Breitkopf, 1742–44; repr. Hildesheim-New York: G. Olms, 1975), 5: 251.



or to its being placed in the margins, but rather—to take up a theme dear to Leibniz<sup>29</sup>—to the transformation of the traditional *historia philosophorum* into the modern *historia philosophiae*. This is also an effect—and not one of the least important—of the “Cartesian revolution.”

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<sup>29</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, hrsg. von Carl Immanuel Gerhardt (Berlin: Asher, 1875–90; repr. Hildesheim-New York: G. Olms, 1978), “Epistola ad exquisitissimae doctrinae virum [Jacobum Thomasium] de Aristotele recentioribus reconciliabili,” 4: 162: “Plerique alii antiquitatis magis quam artis periti, vitas potius quam sententias nobis dederunt. Tu non Philosophorum, sed philosophiae historiam dabis.” The theoretical and methodological turning point signalled by the transition from a “history of philosophers” to a “history of philosophy” was to be stressed—over two centuries after Leibniz—by Eduard Zeller in the manifesto-program (“Die Geschichte der Philosophie, ihre Ziele und Wege”) which inaugurated the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1 (1888), 7.



*DEALBARE AETHIOPEM:*  
A METAPHOR OF *TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM*  
AT THE ORIGINS OF MODERNITY

Marta Fattori

1. *Introduction*

*Translatio studiorum* is a fixed syntagm, originally, and for a long time, used to mean the shift of Greek culture (especially philosophy) to the Near East (Syria, after the closure of Greek non-Christian philosophical schools decreed by Justinian in 529), and later towards the Arab countries. Translations were the privileged tool of *translatio* as proved by the massive corpus of Syriac translations of Plato, Aristotle and scientific works (Galen, for instance) that the Arabs translated from Syriac into Arabic after 650. It is unnecessary here to focus on the different and divergent routes that studies have unearthed: for instance, Latin scholars of the Middle Ages were by no means ignorant, Greek texts were circulating even before the Byzantine Empire, the main example being Boethius. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a number of original texts only appeared much later in the West. With respect to the linear pattern of recovery of Greek culture in the Latin-speaking West, more complex theories than this one can be found, such as the theory put forward by Alain de Libera. According to the great French scholar of the Middle Ages, there were three principal lines of transmission and circulation of pre-Western culture: from Athens to Persia, and from Persia to Harran; from Alexandria to the monasteries of Syria in the seventh–eighth centuries; from Syrian culture to the Arabian, from Alexandria to Baghdad. Thus, the history of philosophy is not to be identified with Christian philosophy but with pagan philosophy, according to which “lo storico non può tacere nulla di ciò che sa” (the historian cannot remain silent about anything that is known). This is why the centers of production of knowledge and the *translationes*—that is, the principal instrument of the *translatio studiorum*—that accompany the long historical epoch known as the Middle Ages are so important. It can, of course, be said that such processes of revision are a part of any historical epoch.

In his opening paper, Tullio Gregory presented an extraordinary picture of “*translatio studiorum*.” I consider this philosophical historical framework an acquired background reference. I would just like to mention that Tullio Gregory’s teaching and insistence on using lexica, terminology and translations as indispensable methodological tools were the basis and springboard for the fundamental study of the development of philosophical language carried out over the decades of research and work realized by the LIE (Lessico Intellettuale Europeo). And the international seminar on *Rencontres de cultures dans la philosophie médiévale. Traductions et traducteurs de l’antiquité tardive au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*,<sup>1</sup> organized together with, and especially thanks to, Jacqueline Hamesse, should also be seen as an essential part of this setting.

Within this complex context, I have carved for myself in this paper a very narrow path. Over ten years ago, when I was studying the presence and fortune of Francis Bacon’s work in Naples during the second half of the seventeenth century, I was struck by the fact that in his passionate defense of the innocence of the philosophy that “they call modern” (“che chiaman moderna”) against the impiety of Aristotelian philosophy,<sup>2</sup> Giuseppe Valletta used similar procedures and arguments to Francis Bacon’s regarding the suppression of the accusation of atheism addressed to the Epicurean school, against the Christianized Aristotle. According to Gassendi, Valletta wanted to refine Epicurean philosophy as it was more suitable and fitting than Aristotelian thought, precisely because it considered the atoms as the origin of all corporeal things, “claiming, however, that God had created them, and had given them movement, extension and shape.”<sup>3</sup>

In his coarse polemic against this modern philosophy, the Jesuit Giovanni Battista De Benedictis accused it of being a vain attempt to “whiten the Ethiopian”:

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<sup>1</sup> Marta Fattori and Jacqueline Hamesse, *Rencontres de cultures dans la philosophie médiévale. Traductions et traducteurs de l’antiquité tardive au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, S.I.E.P.M., Brepols, Louvain-La-Neuve 1990. Cf. *Traduire, Transposer, Transmettre dans l’Antiquité gréco-romaine*, textes réunis par Bernard Bortolussi, Madeleine Keller, Sophie Minon, Lyliane Sznajder, Paris, Picard 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Giuseppe Valletta, *Lettera in difesa della moderna filosofia e dei coltivatori di essa*, in *Opere filosofiche* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1975), 78.

<sup>3</sup> “Che il Gassendi avendo appreso nelle scuole la Filosofia d’Aristotele, e da esso poi tutti i varii sistemi degli antichi filosofanti, per quanto gli fu permesso dalla condizione umana, e dal suo proprio intendimento e abilità, volle dopo seguitare e perfezionare quella d’Epicuro, come più acconcia e proporzionata filosofia d’ogni’altra, ammettendo gli Atomi principii di tutte le cose corporee. . . . *Sostenendo però che Dio gli abbia creati, e che Dio avesse lor dato il movimento e il distendimento e la figura*,” Valletta, *Lettera*, 130. My italics.

I know that Pierre Gassendi has attempted to show that Epicurus is the wisest and most pious of the philosophers of all times, but his efforts to “whiten the Ethiopian” have been in vain. Nobody wishes to be seen publicly to be an atheist, for everybody is afraid, if not of the secret remorse of their conscience, at least of the public denigration of their fame. So the truth remains as far as possible under cover, like the poison hidden in kisses, or the viper among flowers. Such was Epicurus, who has deceived more than one of those who have attempted to judge him.<sup>4</sup>

At the time, I wondered why this *topos*, in common use in rhetoric and dialectics, was being used against Gassendi in a *querelle* of a philosophical nature. But my research took me along other paths, and I set the problem aside for a more appropriate occasion. And now that moment has come.

The proverbial saying “whitening the Ethiopian,” that has reached us via Lucian, can be interpreted as a category of the Impossible. It became a humanistic *topos* thanks to Ermolao Barbaro;<sup>5</sup> but it has a long history. Its widespread humanistic and Renaissance use originates from Erasmus and his *Adagia*. As a proverb on impossibility, the expression “whitening/washing the Ethiopian” runs through all classical history, from the Greek to the Latin cultures. It is found in holy texts up to and including the medieval revival, the Renaissance and later. The expression “whitening/washing the Ethiopian” (*dealbare ethiopem* in Latin) used as a proverb, was translated into vernacular languages, and naturally became richer and changed meaning while moving along the complex intercultural routes it travelled. The Ethiopian might become a Moor, for instance, or whitening might change to washing. Instead of a Moor, black was used simply as the antithesis to white (often in the metaphorical sense of good as opposed to evil, for example).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Benedetto Aletino, *Lettere apologetiche in difesa della teologia scolastica e della filosofia peripatetica* (Napoli: Raillard, 1694), 230: “So che Pietro Gassendi si è studiato di mostrar Epicuro il filosofo più saggio e più pio che mai vivesse, ma egli ha speso indarno l'opra per imbiancar quell'Etiopo. Non è veruno, che voglia esser'empio alla scoperta, temendo sempre, se non i segreti rimorsi della coscienza, almeno il pubblico biasimo della fama. Il perché si cela a tutto sforzo, nascondendo il veleno ne' baci, e l'aspido tra' fiori. Così fu d'Epicuro, e quindi più d'uno egli gabbò nel giudicarlo.”

<sup>5</sup> See Letizia Panizza, *Ermolao Barbaro e Pico della Mirandola tra retorica e dialettica: the De genere dicendi philosophorum del 1485*, in *Una famiglia veneziana nella storia: i Barbaro* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Lettere, Scienze e Arti, 1996), 277–330.

<sup>6</sup> For Greek and Arab proverbs and the collections of Zenobius and Diogenianus, See Andreas Schott, *Παροιμιαὶ Ἑλληνικαί. Adagia sive Proverbia Græcorum ex Zenobio seu Zenodoto, Diogeniano, et Suidæ Collectaneis. (Proverbiorum Græcorum e Vaticana Bibliotheca appendix. Stromateus Proverbialium Versuum.) Partim edita nunc primum, partim Latine reddita, scholiisque parallelis illustrata, ab A. Schotto.* Gr. and Lat. Few MS. notes [by G. Wakefield], Antverpiæ, 1612. The recent book by Emanuele Lelli, *Volpe e leone e Il*

In spite of a relatively limited bibliography, Jean Michel Massing's article *From Greek Proverb to Soap Advert: Washing the Ethiopian*,<sup>7</sup> dating from 1995, provides a history of "washing/whitening the Ethiopian" from an iconographic viewpoint. The images in this article by Massing, who is primarily an art historian, show the iconographic differences even if they derive from a common root: *dealbare*, *Aethiops*/Indian, washing or whitening, and so on. The saying is recorded in a short epigram by Lucian preserved in the *Greek Anthology* (xi 428),<sup>8</sup> in which Lucian assures the reader it is well known. The expression appears in the lists of proverbs by the likes of Zenobius and Diogenianus.<sup>9</sup> In classical antiquity the terms "Indian" and "Ethiopian" were often used interchangeably, and it may have been from Zenobius's collection that the proverb reached Erasmus, the scholar who seems to have introduced three versions of it into Renaissance culture.<sup>10</sup>

The proverb and the emblem are given their definitive expression in Alciati's *Emblemata*, where they appear unequivocally as a category of impossibility.<sup>11</sup> The first authorized edition, *Emblematum libellus* of 1534, was produced in Paris by Christian Wechel, embellished with woodcuts

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*proverbio nella poesia greca* (Alceo, Cratino, Callimaco) (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 2006), is useful for the parallel Greek texts.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Michel Massing, "From Greek Proverb to Soap Advert. Washing the Ethiopian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 58 (1995), 180–201.

<sup>8</sup> *Adversus indoctum et libros multos ementem*, 28: "But no: you are determined not to be cured. Very well: buy book upon book, shut them safely up, and reap the glory that comes of possession: only, let that be enough; presume not to touch nor read; pollute not with that tongue the poetry and eloquence of the ancients; what harm have they ever done to you? All this advice is thrown away, I know that. Shall an Ethiopian change his skin? (Οἶδα ὡς μάτην ταῦτά μοι λελήρηται καὶ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν Αἰθίοπα σμῆχειν ἐπιχειρῶ) You will go on buying books that you cannot use—to the amusement of educated men, who derive profit not from the price of a book, nor from its handsome appearance, but from the sense and sound of its contents."

<sup>9</sup> See Ernst von Leutsch and Friedrich Wilhelm Schneidewin, *Corpus paroemiographorum graecorum* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1958), 1, 18, 187, and 2, 258. See also for a much wider background not closely connected to the saying, yet remembered, Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 5.

<sup>10</sup> It was from Zenobius that the proverb reached the man who seems to have introduced it into Renaissance culture: Erasmus. The saying appears in Erasmus's first collection of adages (1500) in two forms: as *Aethiopem dealbare* ("to whiten an Ethiopian"); but it is in the *Adagiarum chiliades* of 1508 that we find a longer discussion ("Aethiopem lavas; aethiopem dealbas," "You are washing, or whitening an Ethiopian": for Erasmus both expressions have the same meaning)."

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Alciati, *Emblemata* (Padova: Tozzi, 1621), 273: after the title and the number of the emblem: "Impossibili Emblema LIX" there is the engraving (two man washing an Ethiopian at a fountain), followed by the Greek text and the proverb in Latin: "Abluis

by Jollat (the first unauthorized edition had been published in 1531). The earlier edition had 104 emblems while the later one had 113, and completely redesigned woodcuts. The images and the closely related commentaries adhered to the traditional Renaissance dedication, not only Italian, to pictography, allegorical poetry and fables; and the emblems underlined the close bonds between the logic of the emblems and the logic of the commentary. Metaphor and allegory were the result of a Horatian *ut pictura poesis*.<sup>12</sup> The *Emblemata cum commentariis* of 1621, embellished with erudite commentaries, had a wide diffusion, and has come down to us translated into all the vernacular languages, often with parallel texts in Latin and English, Latin, and French, etc.

Not everyone states that the saying originates from a fable by Aesop, but this origin is indicated and handed down by Erasmus of Rotterdam. Commenting on three versions of the saying, the great humanist states that two of them recall Aesop's fable "Adagium ortum videri potest ab Aesopica fabula,"<sup>13</sup> or "Fertur Aesopicus apologus de quodam, qui emto Aethiopi..." a reference we also find in Alciati's *Emblemata*.<sup>14</sup> Aesop's version is not considered original by everyone, although it is included in all the fables attributed to him. It narrates how a rich man bought a Moor and, thinking that his black color was due to negligence, tried to wash it away; but he was never able to "whiten" his color. So the moral of the fable, or *Sentence of the fable* was the following: "Prime nature always remains unchanged, and he tried to do something impossible."<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the origin, and the non-proverbial but allegorical and metaphorical use of the expression in the Christian milieu, the proverb was adapted to indicate that it is possible to change a non-virtuous nature. The origin and reference come from Jeremiah 13:23: "si mutare potest Aethiops pellem suam aut pardus varietates suas et vos poteritis bene facere cum didiceritis malum" ("Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed

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Aethiopem quid frustra? Ah desine: noctis/illustrare nigrae nemo potest tenebras." This is followed by a long commentary providing all the sources and the traditions.

<sup>12</sup> Horatius, *Ars poetica*, 361, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Massing, postulates that Erasmus used the 1505 Aldina edition of the *Collectio proverbiorum Tarrhaei, et Didymi, item eorum, quae apud Sudam, aliosque habentur per ordinem literarum*, in *Vita et Fabellae Aesopi cum interpretatione latina*, Venice 1505, n. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Alciati, *Emblemata*, 272: "Id autem ex apologo quodam Aesopico manasse planum est, de quodam, qui emit Aethiopem, ratusque illum colorem non natuta, sed praeteriti domini negligentia accidisse, perpetuis lotionibus miserum usque ad morbum divexavit, colore nihilo quam antea fuerat meliore."

<sup>15</sup> Aesop, English translation from Giulio Landi's Italian edition (1789), 129.

to do evil," *King James's Bible*).<sup>16</sup> The theological tradition focuses on the moral theme: if evil is innate and impossible to extirpate, what is the role of faith and religion? What is God's role? In the centuries-old history of biblical exegesis and ethical positions, the impossibility of whitening the Ethiopian, i.e. the fixedness of the color of his skin, is an ever-present central theme running through almost all authors down to Alfonso Maria De Liguori.<sup>17</sup> I have selected three emblematic examples from the theological tradition to reveal the diversity, at times only apparent, of the meaning, which I shall put in the footnotes. The first example refers to Augustine's anti-Manichean theories: in reply to the Emperor Julian, quoting the passage from Jeremiah to indicate the impossibility of changing from evil into good, Augustine answers, citing Ambrose.<sup>18</sup> The second example is taken from Thomas Aquinas, who broaches the issue of free will.<sup>19</sup> Lastly, the third example is taken from *Pomerium Sermones de Sanctis* (1499, 1500) by Pelbartus de Themesvár, Franciscan, who used the passage from Jeremiah to show that only divine intervention can guide to virtue a nature tending naturally to evil, or imprisoned by the devil (*peccator liberetur divina*

<sup>16</sup> In his commentary to the Holy Scriptures, the Flemish Jesuit Cornelius Cornelii a Lapide (1567–1637) provides numerous sources for the use of the passage: Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Jerome, Rabano Mauro, Chrysostom, Augustine et al.: See *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram, R.P. Cornelii a Lapide* (Paris: Vives, 1840), vol. 12, 117–18.

<sup>17</sup> Alfonso Maria De Liguori. *Apparecchio alla morte*, in *Opere ascetiche* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1960) vol. 1, 212.

<sup>18</sup> Augustinus, *PL* 45, *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus.*: "L: IV, 41 *Non coercerentur libidines nisi vitiose moverentur.* 42. Vitium non potest tribui Deo. IUL. Attende sane nunc quale sit, quod de tua opinione colligitur; videlicet operiendum pudore non esse, quiddam bonum creditur. Nos autem docuimus voluntatem illam naturaliter sexibus inditam, tam malam non esse, quam ad Dei operam pertinentem. Ac per hoc tu aut impietatem tuam deseres, aut pudorem. Sed quid nos haec autem? *Si mutabit Aethiops pellem suam, aut pardus varietatem* (Ier 13, 23); ita et tu a Manichaeorum mysteriis elueris. AUG. Immo tu Manichaeos adiuuare non desines, nisi istam susceptam tuam, quam etiam Manichaei malam esse convincunt, cum Ambrosio et cum omnibus Catholicis dixeris, ex praevaricatione primi hominis in nostram vertisse naturam; ne secundum illos, quos nesciens adiuvas nefandos haereticos, Deo coaeternum credatur habere principium, tam manifestum hominis vitium."

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aq., S. Iohannis 83, Art. 5 (I, q. 84, n. 5): "Dicit ergo propterea non poteris credere, quia scilicet habent voluntatem obscuratam in sua malitia; Ier. XIII, 23: quomodo scilicet potest *Aethiops mutare pellem suam, et pardus varietates suas; et vos poteritis bene facere, cum didiceritis malum*; Matth. XII, 34: quomodo poteritis bona facere, cum sitis mali? et simile est sicut si dicerem de aliquo: ego nullo modo possum eum diligere; sed habeo eum odio. Quantum ad secundum, sciendum, quod excaecatio et induratio Dei non intelligitur quasi deus immittat malitiam vel ad peccandum impellat, sed per hoc quod non infundat gratiam: quam quidem gratiam infundit ex sua misericordia; sed causa huius quod non infundit, est ex parte nostra, inquantum scilicet in nobis est aliquid gratiae divinae repugnans."



*virtute ex diabolica captivitate*). In *Sermo xli*, where the author describes the various kinds of chains the devil operates through, Pelbartus quotes first the fourth book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and argues that in the first ring of the chain, that of *amor* and *delectatio*, it is difficult to escape from sin, citing Jeremiah, 13. Soon after he makes a distinction between *consuetudo* and *natura*. If it is difficult, if not impossible, to break the chains of *consuetudo*, it is definitely impossible to reverse *nature* if not by divine intervention.<sup>20</sup>

This use will appear of marked importance in the debate against the introduction of "modern philosophy."

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<sup>20</sup> Pelbartus de Themesvár [c. 1435–1504]: *Pomerium de sanctis, Pars aestivalis Sermo XLI*, "Sicut ergo Aethiopis nigredo et pardi varietas cum sint a natura, non possunt immutari secundum naturam, sed bene possunt a Deo." IV. Metaphysicorum. Idcirco prosequens primum mysterium huius sermonis de catenis, quibus ipse diabolus peccatores vinculat, ne de peccatis liberari queant, simul prosequemur, et earum remedia contraria, quibus dirumpantur haec vincula diabolica, et homines salvari valeant peccatores per verae poenitentiae medicamenta. Unde de primo mysterio simulque et secundo agendo notandum, quod praecipuae catenae diaboli sunt novem, quibus miseras animas heu plurimas vinculat, ne a peccatis exeant, sed in eis pereant, et teneantur carcere infernali. Quarum totidem remedia assignabimus, ut sicut Petrus ex Herodis, sic peccator liberetur divina virtute ex diabolica captivitate. . . . Prima dicitur amor et delectatio, scilicet in vitio. . . . Prima catena diaboli dicitur amor et delectatio, scilicet in vitio. Nam sunt multi, qui adeo oblectantur in his, quae sunt carnis et mundi, et tantum ligantur affectu et prava consuetudine, ut omnia salubria eis desipiant, et quotidie peccata peccatis addere gaudeant, et diabolo deserviant. De talibus Hiere. XIII.: *Si mutare potest Aethiops pellem suam, aut pardus varietates suas, et vos poteritis benefacere cum didiceritis malum*. Nam *consuetudo est altera quaedam natura*, ut dicit Philosophus li. de memo. et remi. Et ideo difficile est surgere homini assueto peccatis et delectatione mali vinculo. Hinc Glossa super Ioh. dicit: *Difficile surgit, quem moles malae consuetudinis premit*. Sicut ergo Aethiopis nigredo et pardi varietas cum sint a natura, non possunt immutari secundum naturam, sed bene possunt a Deo. Sic tales peccatores per solam gratiam Dei et conatum fortem liberi arbitrii ad oppositum possunt liberari. Sed quomodo dirumpere valeat homo istam catenam diaboli adiuvante gratia Dei, notandum, quod ad id tria sunt remedia potissima. Unum est recogitatio aeterni supplicii, quoniam ut dicit Gregorius: *Momentaneum est, quod delectat, sed aeternum est, quod cruciat*. Melior est ergo modica amaritudo in faucibus, quam aeternum supplicium in visceribus. Aliud remedium recordatio passionis Christi. Unde Hieronymus ad Eustochium: *Quia impossibile est in sensum hominis non irruere motum, scilicet delectationis pravae, ille ergo laudatur, ille praedicatur beatus, qui statim, ut coeperit cogitare, interficit cogitatus, et allidit eos ad petram, petra autem erat Christus*. Tertium est assuefactio ad oppositum vitii, unde Bernardus: *Clavus clavo tunditur, et consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*. Per haec ergo divina gratia iuvante homo potest liberari." Undoubtedly, St. Ambrose is an authoritative source, and widely known: we have seen him cited in the passage from Augustine (cf. *supra*, note 18). Of great interest is the essay by Isabella Gualandri, *Il lessico di Ambrogio: problemi e prospettive di ricerca*, in "Nec timeo mori", edited by Luigi F. Pizzolato and Marco Rizzi (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1998), 267–312: 295–299.

## 2. *The Modern World*

Hence the *topos* “whitening the Ethiopian” and its variants became stratified in different cultural contexts as the category of impossibility. In the Christian world it was considered the ethical-moral nexus between good and evil, and in this milieu we have seen how God’s intervention seems to be the only way to change or even transform nature or habits, customs and inveterate uses, an antidote to a diabolic intervention. But it is the secular use of the *topos* that is of interest here, which via Lucian, through Ermolao Barbaro and Erasmus, was imposed on modernity. In Pico’s correspondence, his most famous epistolary exchange is with Ermolao Barbaro (1454–1493), and it discusses the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. Ermolao’s reply (“Non possum tibi”) to Pico started a debate, embraced and advanced by following generations. Ermolao writes:

Furthermore, you have assumed a task that is not only, as you yourself admit, “asinine,” or comical, but also impossible. For what else does it mean to “whiten the Ethiopian” if not to defend a way of philosophizing that is barbarian and useless.<sup>21</sup>

With these three lines Lucian’s followers introduced into renaissance Humanism the revived debate philosophy-rhetoric (and dialectics): attempting to defend a barbarian way of philosophizing is merely *aithiopa leukanein*, whitening an Ethiopian’s skin, the proverbial figure of speech disseminated by Lucian and found as a prime and main source throughout the *Emblemata* books, lists of proverbs, etc. Pico himself had defined his own thesis as a disgrace, “exercui me libenter in hac materia tanquam infami, ut qui quartanam laudant... ut ingenium periclitarer.” The reference is found in Plato’s *Republic* when Glaucon praises injustice, non *ex judicio*, but only to provoke the great Socrates *ad laudes justitiae*.<sup>22</sup> Ermolao Barbaro considers these theses “impossible”; Pico, in agreement with Aulus Gellius, considers them “inopinabiles” (*unthinkable*): both

<sup>21</sup> “Ceterum suscepisti rem non solum (ut scribis) “ὑποζυγίωδην” sed etiam “ἀδύνατον.” Quid enim est aliud “aithiopa leukanein” quam rationem philosophandi barbaram et ineptam velle defendere?” *Epist.* 81 Branca. The first word means “like a beast of burden, therefore “asinine (Aristophanes, *Fragmenta*, 731); for the second, see, Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, II, xix, 1392a. The epigram of the Ethiopian is entitled “eis adunaton,” and is translated into Latin as follows: “In impossibile. Aethiopem quid stulte lavas? Nam splendida nunquam / Nox fuerit, lumen sole negante suum.” *Luciani Samosatensis Opera* (Amsterdam: Ravenstein, 1687), vol. 2, 838–39.

<sup>22</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, xvii, 12.

feel they are paradoxical.<sup>23</sup> Erasmus's author list in his preface to *Moriae Encomium* includes Aulus Gellius and others; but for the great humanist Lucian remains the source and archetype of the genre. Indeed in the preface to the *Encomium*, modeling himself on Lucian and the *Vera Historia*, Erasmus defends his "lusus" and states that praising infamous things has a serious aim: "stulticiam laudavimus, sed non omnino stulte."<sup>24</sup> In the eulogy, Folly praises herself:

Thus our chaste flower raises its feathers like a peacock, raises its crest, while the unrepentant adulator goes on comparing him to the Gods, poor though he is, and proposes him as a model of virtue, even if he knows how far from being a model he really is. To sum up, he dresses the crow in feathers that are not his own, whitens the Ethiopian, makes an elephant out of a fly. For my part, I follow that popular saying according to which he who finds nobody to praise him does well to praise himself.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, "whitening the Ethiopian" shouldered itself into the debate between rhetoric and dialectics, rhetoric and philosophy, all of them incorporated into the issue of "genus dicendi," in works and authors following the tradition of Lucian, his paradoxical praising (*Musca* and *Parasitus*). The use of the rhetoric of paradox would find a natural diffusion throughout Europe via Erasmus's *Adagia*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "Infames materias, sive quis mavult dicere inopinabiles...et veteres adorti sunt, non sophistae solum, sed philosophiae quoque." Gellius' favourite philosopher, Favorinus, "oppido quam libens in eas materias se deiciebat, vel ingenio expergificando vel exercendis argutiis...sicuti, cum Thersitae laudes quaesivit et cum febrim quartis diebus recurrentem laudavit. Favorinus in his encomium of the quartan fever mentioned even Plato." *Noctes Atticae*, XVII, xii, 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Erasmus, *Moriae encomion*, praef.

<sup>25</sup> "Quamquam ego hoc alioqui, non paulo etiam modestius arbitror, quam id quod optimatum ac sapientum uulgi faetitat, qui peruerso quodam pudore uel Rhetorem quempiam palponem, uel Poetam uaniloquum, subornare solent, eumque mercede conductum, a quo suas laudes audiant, hoc est, mera mendacia, et tamen uerecundus interim ille, pauonis in morem pennas tollit, cristas erigit, cum impudens assentator nihili hominem Diis aequiparat, cum absolutum omnium uirtutum exemplar proponit, a quo sciat ille se plusquam δις διὰ πασῶν abesse: cum corniculam alienis conuestit plumis: cum τὸν αἰθίοπα λευκαίνει, denique ἐκ μυίας τὸν ἐλέφαντα ποιεῖ. Postremo sequor tritum illud vulgi prouerbum, quo dicitur is recte laudare sese, cui nemo alius contigit laudator." Erasmus, *Moriae encomion*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> "Quamquam hic interim demiror mortalium, ingratitudinem dicam, an segnitiam, quorum cum omnes me studiose colant, meamque libenter sentiant beneficentiam, nemo tamen tot iam saeculis exstitit, qui grata oratione Stultitiae laudes celebrarit, cum non defuerint, qui Busirides, Phalarides, febres quartanas, muscas, caluitia, atque id genus pestes, accuratis magnaue et olei et somni iactura elucubratis laudibus uexerint. A me extemporariam quidem illam et illaboratam, sed tanto ueriores audietis orationem." (Erasmus, *Moriae encomion*, 3).

Three versions of this *topos* are to be found in Erasmus. The first version (*Aethiopem dealbas/Aethiopem lavas*) in the *Adagia* is the best known.<sup>27</sup>

Here Erasmus recalls Lucian as his source (from the book *Contra/Adversus indoctum*), the Plinian explanation of the color of skin (*Nam natus ille Aethiopum nigror, quem Plinius ex vicini syderis vapore putat accidere*), its remote origin dating back to Aesop's fables (*Adagium ortum videri potest ab Aesopica fabula*), but above all its previously mentioned use in the letter to Ermolao. This proverb fits perfectly (*quadrabit*) when one uses beautiful words to embellish poor things, or when one praises someone who does not deserve praise, or when one teaches someone who is not capable of learning (*Hoc item peculiariter quadrabit, cum res parum honesta verborum fucis adornatur, aut cum laudatur illaudatus, aut docetur indocilis*).

The second version (*Aethiopem ex vultu judico*)<sup>28</sup> refers to the category of the impossibility of changing one's own nature: the Ethiopian can change his clothing, but not his skin. When judging (the use of the first person is remarkable), there is of course an interesting version of Jeremiah 13:23: "si mutare potest Aethiops pellem suam." Erasmus does not question the possibility of changing the Ethiopian, but points out that for judgment, it is sufficient to remove frills, embellishments, etc.

The third version (*Aethiops non albescit*)<sup>29</sup> is based on Lucian's last epigram, and it sums up and develops the previous ones: by nature the

<sup>27</sup> Erasmus, *Adagia* L., *Opera omnia* (Lyon: Vander, 1703), vol. 2, 169–170: "L. *Aethiopem lavas: Aethiopem dealbas*. Eandem vim habent, [...] i.e. *Aethiopem lavas*. Et, [...] i.e. *Aethiopem dealbas*. Lucianus in lib. contra indoctum: [...] id est *Ac juxta proverbium, Aethiopem lavare conor*. Nam natus ille Aethiopum nigror, quem Plinius ex vicini syderis vapore putat accidere, nulla abluitur aqua, neque ulla ratione candescit. *Hoc item peculiariter quadrabit, cum res parum honesta verborum fucis adornatur, aut cum laudatur illaudatus, aut docetur indocilis*. *Adagium ortum videri potest ab Aesopica fabula*. Nam quidam mercatus Aethiopem, et existimans cum colorem non natura, sed superioris domini negligentia accidisse, nihil non adhibuit eorum, quibus vestes candefieri solent: adeoque perpetuis lotionibus miserum divexavit, ut illum in morbum impulerit, colore, qui fuerat, manente."

<sup>28</sup> "XXXVIII. *Aethiopem ex vultu judico*. [...] i.e. *Aethiopem ex ipso vultu cognosco*. Praefert quisque aliquo signo, cujusmodi sit moribus. Prae se fert enim Aethiops, nigrore vultus, intortis capillis, labris tumentibus, dentium candore patriam suam. Nam vestem mutare potest Aethiops, faciem non potest," Erasmus, *Adagia*, vol. 2, 348.

<sup>29</sup> "LXXXVIII. *Aethiops non albescit*. [...] i.e. *Aethiops non candescit*. De iis dici solitum, qui nunquam mutaturi sunt ingenium. Quicquid enim nativum, id haud facile mutatur. Fertur Aesopicus apologus de quodam, qui emto Aethiopi, cum eum colorem arbitraretur non nativum esse, sed domini superioris accidisse neglectu, assidua lotura faciem divexavit, ita ut morbum etiam adjungeret, colore nihilo, quam antea fuerat, meliore. Fertur et Epigramma Luciani nomine: [...] i.e. Abluis Aethiopem frustra, quin desinis artem? Haud unquam efficies, nox sit ut atra dies," Erasmo, *Adagia*, t. II, 947.

Ethiopian cannot become white, and therefore it is useless to persist in such efforts.

And so we come back to the use of this proverb I indicated at the beginning: the rejection of “modern” philosophical writings because they are uselessly “laundered” to make them acceptable. When following Valletta’s heated discussion with Aletino with respect to Gassendi (the latter perhaps being the swordsman used to stab Descartes), it must be kept in mind that Aletino was one of the staunchest defenders of an Aristotelian orthodoxy. He spent his whole life strongly opposing the representatives of the Neapolitan intelligentsia, from Leonardo di Capua to Francesco d’Andrea, i.e. the entire *Accademia degli Investiganti*. It was no mere chance that he was a member of the *Accademia dei Discordanti* that had been set up to oppose the *Investiganti* by the physician Carlo Pignatari, and was presided over by another physician, Luca Tozzi (1638–1717), a scholar of natural sciences, physics, mathematics, chemistry, but above all medicine. His unrefined defense of orthodoxy against the “modern philosophy” (the Neapolitan physician De Capua obviously, indeed all the *Investiganti*, but above all Pierre Gassendi and Descartes), was implacable and relentless. It gave rise to a series of replies, denunciations and pamphlets. The long-standing enemy was Costantino Grimaldi,<sup>30</sup> and there was a nasty final twist to this intellectual-philosophical debate when De Benedictis was summoned to the Holy Office in the quality of *consultor*, perhaps precisely because of the merits of his accusations against Grimaldi, and his refutation of “modern philosophy.” Indeed in Rome, in 1702, De Benedictis made sure he was entrusted with examining his enemy Grimaldi’s books, and tried to have them condemned. But Rome was not Naples. The sides were not so inflexibly opposed as they were in Naples; things moved in a more “soft footed” way. Over-simplistic and unrefined polemics were not appreciated, even if, above all, Grimaldi could rely on pro-Jansenist and anti-Jesuit supporters of his theological stance. In Rome Grimaldi had supporters and more cautious adversaries: he responded to Aletino’s denunciation by accusing the latter’s books of being impious. There were

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<sup>30</sup> Costantino Grimaldi was born in Naples in 1667, and studied law without neglecting classical studies and humanities. He was a jurist and one of Giuseppe Valletta’s circle and thus became a friend of all the Neapolitan *intelligentsia* of the period, including Francesco Billio, Giacomo Grazini and Matteo Egizio. He agreed with the idea of a universal history of philosophy, an idea shared by Valletta’s circle, which Grimaldi conceived to be in contrast with the Jesuit Giovan Battista De Benedictis (Benedetto Aletino). It was a fierce controversy that lasted a long time. On Costantino Grimaldi, see the important entry by Franco A. Meschini, in *DBI*, vol. 59 (2003), *sub voce*.

two censorship reports. The first was negative, while the second, positive opinion was delivered by the Carmelite friar Barberio, a staunch member of the anti-Jesuit movement. The issue was entrusted to a third person, and then postponed *sine die* until De Benedictis's death in Rome, on May 15, 1706. Grimaldi continued to attack his adversary even after his death, but the trials and tribulations of that exchange go beyond the present study.

I began by quoting an excerpt from Valetta with Aletino's commentary, and when I was conducting in-depth studies for today's talk I realized that, to a great extent, the refutation of "rational philosophy" through the metaphor "whitening the Ethiopian," on one side and the other, unfolded in Naples at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is by no means fortuitous that this controversy focuses on Gassendi before being propagated throughout the eighteenth century. The civil function of Valletta's library,<sup>31</sup> that private academy of science, is well known. It is enough to think of what Pietro Giannone writes in his *Istoria civile del Regno di Napoli*, where Valletta's library is also linked to the importance given to English culture and the *filosofanti d'Olanda* (the Dutch philosophers). This grafting of modern and rational philosophy on to the traditional culture did not go uncontested in Naples, but it revived the idea of southern Italy, bravely defending the freedom to read, to increase knowledge, and philosophize. Giannone's *Istoria civile* is a result of this cultural trend, and in his autobiography he recounts the formation and the intense reading of the "moderns" in Valletta's library:

What had most encouraged me was the example of Arthur Duck, an Englishman, whose golden book *The De usu et auctoritate iuris Romanorum in dominiis principum christianorum* (London 1653) was extremely rare in Naples at that time, and almost unknown, but it showed me the way in which to do in the kingdom of Naples exactly what was being done in the kingdoms of Great Britain. . . . And in doing it, I became aware that it was really not possible to understand the history of laws if at the same time the civil history was not conjugated to it, leading to knowledge of their authors, their historical context, their aims, their use of the news available to them, and to knowledge of the various states, changes and constitutions of those things that had caused so many varied and multiple regulations. In this conviction I was confirmed by another Englishman, that is Bacon of

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<sup>31</sup> It is superfluous to repeat the vast and well known bibliography on the "civil" importance of Valletta's library, both as a place and collection of books. For Valletta and his library, see the bibliography in the notes of Michele Rak's introductory essay (*Storia di un intellettuale moderno*) to *Opere filosofiche*, 9–16.

Verulam, who in his wise book *De augmentis scientiarum* considers an exact *historia civilis* among *desiderata*. And the books were provided to me with great kindness by Valletta's grandchildren, who had kept the library of their famous ancestor intact.<sup>32</sup>

The extremely variegated relations between a wider and European *moderna filosofia* and Cartesianism was welcomed by the acute Girolamo Tartarotti, who, in his observations to Giuseppe Valletta's *Lettera in difesa della filosofia moderna*, specified that if it is true that being a follower of Descartes means being "modern," the opposite is not true: that is, it is possible to be modern without being a Cartesian, since between Cartesianism and modern philosophy there is a relationship between species and genre.<sup>33</sup>

In modern philosophy these relationships between Cartesianism, Atomism, Baconism, and Platonism, explain the diversified traditions that meet, merge, and interweave and then draw apart, even if they all "condemn" Aristotle and every pretext for an abstract metaphysics. Condemning Aristotle and all abstract metaphysics means *libertas philosophandi* and hence civil commitment. It is no mere chance that Francis Bacon, famous and read in Naples, is also remembered for his *Essayes*, and thanks to this work the philosopher is acknowledged as an *auctoritas*, used by Gassendi himself to defend Democritus and Epicurus from the accusation of atheism:

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<sup>32</sup> Our translation. "Mi aveva a ciò maggiormente spinto l'esempio di Arturo Duck, inglese, il di cui aureo libretto *De usu et auctoritate iuris Romanorum in dominis principum christianorum* (London 1653), in Napoli allor rarissimo e a pochi noto, mi avea mostrato la via di poter far io nel regno di Napoli ciò che egli fece esattamente ne' regni della Gran Bretagna. . . . E nel progresso conobbi che non poteva esattamente capirsi l'istoria delle leggi se alla medesima non si accoppiava l'istoria civile per saper gli autori, le occasioni, il fine, l'uso, l'intelligenza che si era lor dato, e per conoscere i vari stati, cangiamenti e costituzione delle cose, che dieder causa a tanti vari e molteplici regolamenti. In questo concetto mi confermò un altro inglese, e questi fu Bacon di Verulamio il quale nel savio libro *De augmentis scientiarum* fra le cose desiderate ripone una esatta istoria civile. . . . E i libri m'erano con somma cortesia somministrati da' nipoti Valletta i quali ancora serbavano intatta la famosa biblioteca lasciatagli dall'avo Giuseppe Valletta," Pietro Giannone, *Vita* (Napoli: Nicolini, 1905), 42–43.

<sup>33</sup> "Ora passiamo a discorrere brevemente dell'idea generale che l'autore della presente Lettera ha avuto; il quale ha divisato, che la difesa di Renato Descartes sia la difesa della filosofia moderna e la condannazione d'Aristotele sia la condannazione della volgare. Intorno a ciò è da avvertire che la moderna filosofia non è in niun modo costituita dalla filosofia del Descartes che Cartesiano e Moderno sia la medesima cosa. *E' ben vero che non si può essere Cartesiano senza essere ancora Moderno: ma non è vero che non si possa essere Moderno senza essere Cartesiano. Per la qual cosa la filosofia Cartesiana si ha alla Moderna, come la specie al genere*" (Girolamo Tartarotti, *Osservazioni alla "Lettera in difesa della filosofia moderna" di Giuseppe Valletta*, in *Opere filosofiche*, 400).



The wise Verulamius in his *Moral Essays* defends them, and rightly so, from the infamous accusation of atheism, concluding with that saying, in every way worthy of him: *Non Deos vulgi negare profanum, sed vulgi opiniones Diis applicare profanum*.<sup>34</sup>

According to Giuseppe Valletta, Bacon in his *Essayes* defended Democritus, Epicurus, and the entire school of Atomism from the *nota infame* of atheism—an accusation that had created turmoil in Neapolitan civil society from the second half of the century. Given the importance of Gassendism, thanks to which Democritus could be read in the Lucretian version of it, bringing it back into Christian territory, Valletta placed Baconian philosophy alongside Atomism.<sup>35</sup>

In this milieu, in this ambit, there were two opposing groups in Naples and elsewhere, one led by De Benedictis and the other by Costantino Grimaldi, and their followers. De Benedictis's philosophical works—more anti-Cartesian than pro-Aristotelian and imbued with venom and bitter polemics—were aimed more at demonstrating the impiety of his enemies than at understanding their underlying reasons; while Grimaldi's anticurialism, which was also defended by Pietro Giannone, revealed the philosopher's new role: a role that was more committed to society, and unshackled from Aristotelian restraints.

In 1694 De Benedictis, under the pseudonym of Benedetto Aletino, had the *Lettere apologetiche in difesa della teologia scolastica e della filosofia peripatetica* printed. These were five letters addressed to important imaginary (yet identifiable) persons of the investigating circle. An answer to the Jesuit was called for immediately, and Grimaldi himself lists the persons who intended to reply: Giuseppe Lucina, Filippo Anastasio, Francesco D'Andrea, Domenico Greco and Giuseppe Magrino. Grimaldi initially thought of answering indirectly, by compiling the *Storia universale della filosofia* that was so dear to Valletta's circle.

Grimaldi's three answers to Aletino were published between 1699 and 1703. The first (*Risposta alla lettera apologetica in difesa della teologia scolastica di Benedetto Aletino. Opera nella quale si dimostra esser quanto necessaria ed utile la teologia dogmatica e metodica, tanto inutile, e vana la*

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<sup>34</sup> Our translation. "...Onde a gran ragione dalla nota infame dell'Ateismo va difendendolo ancora il giudiciosissimo Verulamio ne *Saggi Morali*, conchiudendo con quel detto veramente degno di lui: *Non Deos vulgi negare profanum, sed vulgi opiniones Diis applicare profanum*," Valletta, *Lettera*, 240. Where the saying "worthy of him" is taken from *Vite* by Diogenes Laertius (X, 123). On Valletta, see Eugenio Garin, *Giuseppe Valletta storico della filosofia*, in *Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo. Studi e ricerche* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1974).

<sup>35</sup> Valletta, *Lettera*, 265.



*volgar teologia scolastica*) was printed anonymously in Geneva. Descartes, who, following Neapolitan custom, was often placed alongside Gassendi, is presented as respectful of the sacred doctrine, unlike the philosophers who debated on theology.

Before long the name of the author of the *Risposta* was revealed, and Grimaldi's fame and esteem grew outside the kingdom and put him in contact with European figures, such as G. V. Gravina, L. A. Muratori, A. Magliabechi, and J. Mabillon. The second reply (*Risposta alla seconda lettera apologeticadi Benedetto Aletino. Opera utilissima a' professori della filosofia, in cui fassi vedere quanto manchevole sia la peripatetica dottrina*, 1702) addresses more directly the problems of Aristotelian philosophy and its relations with the Christian faith.

Grimaldi turns this second answer into a heated attack against Aristotle, placing it on the terrain nearest Aletino's heart: the presumed but (false) theological reliability of the Stagirite philosopher. Using a masterly grid of texts (Francesco Patrizi, Pierre de la Ramée, Pierre Gassendi, but also those written by Jesuits, such as Juan Maldonado, Antonio Possevino, Michel Elizade,<sup>36</sup> and the Dominican Melchior Cano)<sup>37</sup> Grimaldi shows how, in the light of Aristotelian principles, the cornerstones of faith, i.e. providence, creation, immortality of the soul, become indefensible, as does the corruptibility of the skies on the horizon of science. On the contrary, the moderns, in particular Descartes, had professed doctrines that did not conflict with the Scriptures: the French philosopher's commitment to reconcile the Eucharistic doctrine with his conception of the *res extensa* is an example.

The third answer (*Risposta alla terza lettera apologetica contra il Cartesio creduto da più d'Aristotele di Benedetto Aletino*) defends Descartes from Aletino's attacks. And this answer represents one of the most significant documents regarding the dissemination of Descartes's works and thought in Naples. Grimaldi seems to be the most attentive Neapolitan interpreter of the French philosopher, thanks to a combination of his almost complete knowledge of the corpus of the former's works, and his interpretative perspicuity. Descartes, "the best philosopher who ever lived" is mainly perceived, starting from his metaphysics, through a new interpretation, even with respect to thinkers such as Valletta and D'Andrea, and generally

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<sup>36</sup> Melchior Cano, *De locis theologicis* (Salamanca, 1562). See James Franklin, *The Science of Conjecture: Evidence and Probability before Pascal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 192–93.

<sup>37</sup> Cano, *De locis theologicis*, 19.

speaking to the members of the *investiganti* and the *Accademia di Medina Coeli*. This allowed him to ward off the dangerous accusation that Descartes was in collusion with the Atoms of antiquity, and to liken him to Plato and Augustine: Descartes being considered a “loyal disciple” of the latter. In his strong rebuttal of Aletino’s thesis, Grimaldi polemizes with some of his sources, such as Fr. G. Daniel and the astronomer Pierre Petit, whom Aletino had cited in return as Grimaldi’s mentor. In his third answer, Grimaldi counters the single passages written by Aletino and thus defends Gassendi as well from the accusation of having tried to whiten the Ethiopian (i.e. Epicurus). Grimaldi refutes in various ways Aletino’s accusation mentioned at the beginning of this paper. First of all he reveals what, in his opinion, Aletino is really trying to do, that is, to accuse Descartes of atheism through Gassendi:

Who is so obtuse as not to see that here Aletino, who attacks Epicurus so violently, having us consider him similar to a rotten atheist, is really attacking Gassendi; and at the same time launching himself against the honor and piety of Descartes, considered only a little further down as an appendix of Epicurus, and as a poor philosopher who opens the way towards Atheism.<sup>38</sup>

Lastly he overturns the accusation of wanting to “whiten the Ethiopian.” On the contrary, Costantino Grimaldi feels that Gassendi wishes to whiten the blemishes of impiety that the evil and the vulgar had cast on the face of Epicurus so as to return that face to its “original” countenance:

In so far as that worthy man . . . attempts to whiten those blemishes of impiety impressed on Epicurus’s face by the evil of his emulators and the credulity of the vulgar: determined as he is to wipe away those deformities that have become a part of Epicurus’s countenance. He is not so much concerned to present Epicurus as the wisest and most pious of the philosophers, but he deprives the world of the vulgar and false belief that he was the most ignorant and impious of those who lived in a dark age.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Our translation. “Chi è di così rintuzzato intendimento, che non vegga che qui l’Aletino non per altro così fortemente si scaglia contro Epicuro, e vuol darlo a dividere un marcio Ateo, che che ne divisi in contrario il Gassendi; se non per urtare contro all’onore e la pietà del Cartesio, dichiarandolo poco appresso, per un’appendice d’Epicuro, e per un Filosofo, che apra la più agevole strada all’Ateismo?” Costantino Grimaldi, *Risposta alla terza lettera apologetica contra il Cartesio creduto da più d’Aristotele di Benedetto Aletino: Opera in cui dimostrasi quanto salda e pia sia la filosofia di Renato delle Carte e perché questa si debba stimare più d’Aristotele* (Köln: Hecht, 1703), 94. The town and the publisher’s name are obviously false.

<sup>39</sup> Our translation. “[P]oiché quel valent’uomo . . . è attento in imbiancare quelle macchie d’empietà, che sul volto di Epicuro aveva impresse la malivoglienza degli emoli, e la

The *topos* appears in many passages of this work, but the proverb of the Ethiopian is completely reversed: the accuser (Aletino) becomes the accused as he is stupidly unaware of the fact that only the “evil of emulators” and the “credulity of the vulgar” had created the “blemishes” of impiety; and that the “blemishes” of impiety reveal Jeremiah’s pard (leopard). In a totally reversed version of the saying, the accuser (Gassendi), “undeceives” the world from those “vulgar beliefs” and “unveils” the artificiality of the blemishes of Jeremiah’s pard, and hence does not *whiten* the Ethiopian (Epicurean) but finally reveals his “original features.” Here and elsewhere, Grimaldi freely uses this strategy (his accuser uses the “whitening of the Ethiopian” to stop the dissemination of, or the possibility to read, a work, be it because of envy, cunning or ignorance).

Here I hope to be allowed to open a parenthesis. In his repeated argumentation against the Holy Office, Costantino Grimaldi uses the same “reversal.” In many a page of constantly intelligent discussion which, in its use of sources also brings to mind *Nouvelles de la République des lettres* by Pierre Bayle, Grimaldi refuses to accord any importance to being, as he affirms metaphorically, “fulminated” by the Holy Office, making a clear and polemical distinction between an *ex cathedra* condemnation by the Pope and a condemnation meted out by a Congregation too often made up of envious, uncultured and cunning members: Grimaldi carries on for many pages his hypothesis of a radical distinction between a condemnation by the Congregation, albeit sacred, and a one emanating directly from papal authority; the latter is “sovereign” since one cannot oppose it without being daring and heretical, because the sentence of the church is a sentence of “right;” whereas, a condemnation, coming from men often elected by chance, members of a sacred congregation, can become slander, a “damnation of books,” which can be corrected; it is a harmful and useless consequence of the astuteness of men who are too often zealous and sometimes dishonest. As usual Grimaldi carries on his reasoning through authoritative sources, in this case the famous Théophil Raynaud.<sup>40</sup> Jesuit

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credulità del volgo: tanto è egli forte in ripigliare quelle deformità che sono native delle fattezze d'Epicuro: sì che egli non ne dà a dividere Epicuro per lo più saggio e più pio dei Filosofanti: ma disinganna il mondo da quella volgar credenza, che il più ignaro fosse e il più empio di quanti ne ebbero quei tempi di tenebre,” Grimaldi, *Risposta alla terza lettera*, 94–95.

<sup>40</sup> Grimaldi, *Risposta alla terza lettera*, 38–39: “Or può ognuno di leggieri avvisare, che non per altro fine essi dovendo discreditar alcun libro proibito, il dicono fulminato dalla Chiesa: e per contrario, volendolo sostenere, il dicono dannato dalla Congregazione, distinguendo tra la dannazione fatta da Santa Chiesa, e tra quella fatta dalla Sacra

theologian and writer, he taught grammar and humanities at Avignon, philosophy and theology at Lyons and for a time at Rome. He was a theologian of broad erudition and a writer of great fertility. His style, however, is often prolix and sometimes obscure, whilst in his controversial writings he indulges in satire and invective. It is not by chance that Grimaldi quotes a long passage from Raynaud's *Erotemata de malis ac bonis libris*; Raynaud himself, in fact, had tried to distinguish between a condemnation coming directly from the Pope or the Church and one coming from "overzealous" members of the Congregation, who were also jeopardizing the Church. In his analysis on this subject, Raynaud devoted the chapter *Quid peculiariter Pontificiis censoribus timendum* to the potential consequences of the papal censors' actions. In order to understand the Jesuit's attitude, it is worth noting that some of his writings—which he had decided not to publish—were collected after his death in a work entitled *Th. Raynaudi*

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Congregazione; se non perché estimano diversa impressione dover nel nostro animo fare l'autorità d'una Congregazione della Romana Corte, da quella che ne farebbe l'autorità della Santa Chiesa. E' questa del tutto sovrana, e ragguardevole in sì fatta guisa, che non le si possa ripugnare senza nota di temerità o di miscredenza, secondo che i suoi decreti al fatto non revelato appartengono al diritto; ma l'autorità d'una sola Congregazione, comechè sia grande non di meno è tale per loro avviso, che i suoi decreti, massimamente quelli che hai fatti appartengono, ovvero in essi si appoggiano, sì come è la dannazione de' libri, non sieno sottoposti alle surrezioni, correzioni ed artifici di uomini autorevoli ed astuti, che non per zelo di Religione, ma per gara di dottrina procurino, e promuovano la dannazione d' alcun libro, calunniandolo di falsa dottrina. Il che poter di leggieri avvenire estimerà ognuno, che rifletta ciò, che avverte dietro a questa maniera il celebre Gesuita Raynaudo." Grimaldi, 42–43 and more: "E poiché tale ingiuste proibizioni de' libri portan seco pessime conseguenze: però parve al medesimo Raynaudo di dare ai Romani Censori il seguente avviso: In Romanis confixionibus per Pontificios ministros latis ea specialis macula cernitur, si indebite fiant, quod injusta confixio in Sedis Apostolicae injuriam, vilipensionem aliquam apud in providos redundat. Omnia enim, quae à delectis Pontificia autoritate censoribus perpetrantur, eadem autoritate quali per sperta transmittitur per orbe ubi nunc mortales (heu!) decussa veteri simplicitate, fucciso obediēte vigore, homines plus justo plerumque oculati, de censuris alienis censuram facile ferunt, judicium etiam cū sunt justa, ita librant, ut in partem sinistram facile detorqueant, quae jure ac meritò fuerint conflictuata. Inde ergo efficitur, ut multo magis nihili fiat confixio, cum injusta fuerit (quod ob eruditionem quae alibi potest esse, non minor, latere nequit) isque malè latae soffixionis despectus, in contemptum Pontificiae autoritatis, qua hujusmodi censores conflictuti sunt, malè veritur, sed tamen vertitur. Experti sanè sumus non semel, confixiones Romanas neglectui à plerisque Transalpinis haberi, illasque neglectas partem aliquam (quod dolendum, imo, aversandum est) refundi in auctoritatem, cuius sporsio est, censoria, quam administri exerunt. Hoc si in censuris ritè, ac jure latis, quales omnes Romanas haberi par est, non semel deprehendimus; quanto facilius consequeretur, si vitio ministrorum, qui creditam sibi potestatem in malevolentia suae arma verterent, liber innoxius, injusta confixione percelleretur, ita ut auctor verè, ac jure posset illud Erasmi sub initium Apologiae contra tunicam usurpare?" Grimaldi, *Risposta alla terza lettera*, 42–43.

*Apopompaus* (Krakow, 1669), which was condemned by the Congregation of Index (*Decretum* S.O. 1–9, 1671).

Following Raynaud's argumentations Grimaldi writes:

Now if, in order to oppose Aletino when he thunders with a loud voice that Descartes's works have been "fulminated" by the church, I wished to take advantage of his astuteness, and of the sentiments of the people of his circle, I could easily demonstrate how his opposition takes the form of a cry uttered by one who wishes to induce fear into his enemy when he has no real arguments with which to oppose him. I could claim that neither the church nor the Pope, but rather the Congregation of the Index, is the one who has damned the works of Descartes. For the said Congregation, when it makes such prohibitions, is subject to the deceit of the astute men who are members of that Congregation, whose artifices make the most innocent seem criminal. I could further add that Descartes's works could easily seem worth of condemnation in the eyes of the Censors: in fact, given that they are Aristotelians and Scholastics, they are often of that sort of men against whom the celebrated Alfonso di Castro used to inveigh.<sup>41</sup>

I would like to conclude my little study by saying that the use of the expression "whitening the Ethiopian" when referring to Gassendi, may not be causal. The philosopher from Digne himself uses it in an extremely important passage, in his objections to the *Meditations of First Philosophy* by Descartes. In the *First meditation*, René Descartes had put forward his project to free the mind totally from prejudices in order to sever the bond with the senses.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Our translation. "Or se io per contrappormi all'Aletino, quando ad alta voce s'intona, essere state le opere del Cartesio *fulminate* dalla chiesa, mi volessi avvalere dell'astuzia sua, e dei sentimenti di quelli della sua schiera; mi sarebbe agevole il dimostrare esser questa sua opposizione a guisa d'un grido fatto da uomo, che si attenti spaventar il nemico, quando non ha argomenti per offenderlo: poichè dir potrei, che non la Chiesa ne il Pontefice, ma la Congregazione dell'Indice è quella che ha dannate l'opere del Cartesio: la quale in somiglianti divieti è sottoposta agli inganni degli uomini astuti, i quali coi loro artifici fanno comparire rei quegli che sono più innocenti: potrei dire, che non era malagevole, che sembrassero dannabili l'opere del Cartesio agli occhi dei Censori; i quali per essere Aristotelici e Scolastici sogliono sovente esser della sorte di quei contro cui così ebbe a dire il celebre Alfonso di Castro..." Grimaldi, *Risposta alla terza lettera*, 44; then a long quotation from *Adversus omnes haereses libri XIV* (1535) by Alfonso de Castro, the famous *haeresiomastix*, follows. A quotation that might seem unusual used as a confirmation and verification of Grimaldi's thesis in defense of Descartes, but it is indeed through a masterly dovetail of quotations that he succeeds in presenting complex positions pretending to maintain an orthodox form.

<sup>42</sup> Descartes, *Med.* 1, *AT* 4.26–31: "Vereor tamen ne a multis satis percipi non possint, tum quia etiam longiusculae sunt, et aliae ab aliis pendent, tum praecipue quia requirunt

Gassendi's reply is unambiguous: you (Descartes) presume that the mind can be free of all prejudices (*supponis posse mentem liberam fieri a praejudiciis omnibus*), but this is impossible (*at impossibilis res videtur*).<sup>43</sup> Here we have the category of the Impossible. Gassendi then continues the debate, refusing the mainly dualistic character of Descartes's thought. He radicalizes his stance, not accepting the ongoing approach put forward by the French philosopher who had confessed, at the beginning of his *Second meditation*: "*in tantas dubitationes hesternae meditatione conjunctus sum, ut nequeam amplius earum oblivisci nec videam tamen qua ratione solvendae sunt*."<sup>44</sup> Gassendi goes on criticizing him, writing that believing that the mind is more capable of true perception by turning it towards a false one, seems like requiring one who wished to become white to become first an Ethiopian (p. 602) (*videri, ac existimare, debere quempiam, ut dealbetur, fieri prius Aethiopem*).<sup>45</sup>

This is not the right place to start a discussion on the objections put forward by Gassendi to Descartes. Yet I cannot but underline the technically strong use of our *topos* in Gassendi who, perhaps, disseminates it in the very culture that uses it against him. Furthermore and lastly, the passage in Gassendi shows a glimpse of another use of the *topos*, a logical one. In reality, all this refers us back to Boethius who, in his commentary on Porphyry, entrusts the topic of the Ethiopian to a logical context and ensures it will be handed down. Boethius's commentary on Porphyry often mentions the example of the Ethiopian, in the category of accident: *dormire est separabile accidens, nigrum vero esse inseparabiliter corvo et Aethiopi accidit (potest autem subintellegi et corvus albus et Aethiops amittens colorem praeter subiecti corruptionem)*;<sup>46</sup> in the category *De communibus*

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mentem a praejudiciis plane liberam, et quae se ipsam a sensuum consortio facile subducatur. Nec certe plures in mundo Metaphysicis studiis quam Geometricis apti reperiuntur."

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Gassendi, *Disquisitio* (Paris: Vrin, 1962), 37.

<sup>44</sup> Descartes, *AT* 7.23.

<sup>45</sup> Gassendi, *Disquisitio*, 42: "Quinto supponis non posse mentem in isto quasi equilibrio constitutam à recta rerum perceptione detorqueri. Sed inprimis, sequitur potius ex hac ipsa indifferentia, quod ante dicebam, ut mens tam ad pravam perceptionem detorqueri, quam ad rectam converti posse. Sequitur deinde, ut tanto facilius detorqueatur ad pravam, quanto longius abest à perceptione veri, et recentior est à perceptione falsi. Addo, existimare mentem capaciorem fieri verae perceptionis ex deflexione ad falsitatem, perinde videri, ac existimare, debere quempiam, ut dealbetur, fieri prius Aethiopem."

<sup>46</sup> *De accidenti*. "Accidens vero est quod adest et abest praeter subiecti corruptionem. Dividitur autem in duo, in separabile et in inseparabile; namque dormire est separabile accidens, nigrum vero esse inseparabiliter corvo et Aethiopi accidit (potest autem subintellegi et corvus albus et Aethiops amittens colorem praeter subiecti corruptionem).

*generis et accidenti*,<sup>47</sup> *De propriis generis et accidentis*,<sup>48</sup> *De communibus proprii et accidentis* (quemadmodum enim praeter risibile non subsistit homo, ita nec praeter nigredinem subsistit Aethiops),<sup>49</sup> *De propriis proprii et accidentis*,<sup>50</sup> etc.

I intend to stop here, pointing out that this is only a short episode of a story that I continue to work on. So far I have reached the end of the nineteenth century.

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Definitur autem sic quoque: 'accidens est quod contingit eidem esse et non esse', vel 'quod neque genus neque differentia neque species neque proprium, semper autem est in subiecto subsistens,' *Porphyrii Isagoge, translatio Boethii*, in *Aristoteles Latinus*, I 6–7 (Bruges-Paris: Turnhout 1966), 20.

<sup>47</sup> *De communibus generis et accidentis*. "Generis vero et accidentis commune est de pluribus (quemadmodum dictum est) praedicari sive separabile sit sive inseparabile; et enim moveri de pluribus, et nigrum de corvis et hominibus et Aethiopibus et aliquibus inanimatis," *Porphyrii Isagoge, translatio Boethii*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> *De propriis generis et accidentis*. "Differt autem genus accidente quoniam genus ante species est, accidentia vero speciebus inferiora sunt; nam si etiam inseparabile sumatur accidens, sed tamen prius est illud cui accidit quam accidens. Et genere quidem quae participant aequaliter participant, accidente vero non aequaliter; intentionem enim et remissionem suscipit accidentium participatio, generum vero minime. Et accidentia quidem in individuis principaliter subsistunt, genera vero et species naturaliter priora sunt individuis substantiis. Et genera quidem in eo quod quid est praedicantur de his quae sub ipsis sunt, accidentia vero in eo quod quale aliquid est vel quomodo se habeat unumquodque; 'qualis est' enim 'Aethiops' interrogatus dicit 'niger,' et quemadmodum se Socrates habeat, dicit quoniam sedet vel ambulat," *Porphyrii Isagoge, translatio Boethii*, 25–26.

<sup>49</sup> *De communibus proprii et accidentis*. "Commune autem proprii et inseparabilis accidentis est quod praeter ea numquam consistent illa in quibus considerantur; quemadmodum enim praeter risibile non subsistit homo, ita nec praeter nigredinem subsistit Aethiops; et quemadmodum semper et omni adest proprium, sic et inseparabile accidens," *Porphyrii Isagoge, translatio Boethii*, 31.

<sup>50</sup> *De propriis proprii et accidentis*. "Differunt autem quoniam proprium uni soli speciei adest (quemadmodum risibile homini), inseparabile vero accidens, ut nigrum, non solum Aethiopi sed etiam corvo adest et carboni et ebano et quibusdam aliis. Quare proprium conversim praedicatur de eo cuius est proprium et est aequaliter, inseparabile vero accidens conversim non praedicatur. Et propriorum quidem aequalis est participatio, accidentium vero haec quidem magis, illa vero minus. Sunt quidem etiam aliae communitates vel proprietates eorum quae dicta sunt, sed sufficiunt etiam haec ad discretionem eorum communitatisque traditionem," *Porphyrii Isagoge, translatio Boethii*, 31.





DESCARTES'S PHYSICS VS. FEAR OF DEATH?  
AN ENDLESS *TRANSLATIO* OF THOUGHTS AND BODIES

Vasiliki Grigoropoulou

The subject of death has been a source of philosophical *aporia* (perplexity) and a focus for emotive debate. Diametrically opposed answers have been given to the question of whether “death is an evil,” and indeed to the question of what death *is*: whether or not it represents the annihilation of existence, and of the soul: what the *soul* is, what its relation to the body is, whether the soul survives after death. The subject of death is not merely a matter of concern for each person; the stance adopted towards it is of central importance in moral philosophy.

In June 1646, when Pierre Chanut was studying the *Principia philosophiae*, he received a letter from the philosopher, in which Descartes mentioned that he had found a way not to fear death. From the letter let us focus on this passage:

Of course, I agree with you entirely that the safest way to find out how we should live is to discover first what we are, what kind of world we live in, and who is the creator of this world, or the master of the house we live in. But I cannot at all claim or promise that all I have written is true, and besides there is a very great distance between the general notion of heaven and earth, which I have tried to convey in my *Principia*, and the detailed knowledge of the nature of man, which I have not yet discussed. However, I do not want you to think I wish to divert you from your plan, and so I must say in confidence that what little knowledge of physics I have tried to acquire has been a great help to me in establishing sure foundations in moral philosophy. Indeed I have found it easier to reach satisfactory conclusions on this topic than on many others concerning medicine, on which I have spent much more time. So instead of finding ways to preserve life, I have found another, much easier and surer way, which is not to fear death. But this does not depress me, as it commonly depresses those whose wisdom is drawn entirely from the teaching of others, and rests on foundations that depend only on human prudence and authority (AT, IV, 441–42; CSMK, III, 289).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations: AT: *Œuvres de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1964–74); CSMK: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

In the above letter Descartes acknowledges that his physics is not complete or precise. He nevertheless maintains that it has been of some use in establishing sure foundations for his moral philosophy. But his physics pertains to bodies which are described as extended things without thought, while moral philosophy has to do with human beings, who think and act. The stance vis-à-vis death is a crucial question of ethics, but according to Descartes it has to be grounded in natural philosophy. From the viewpoint of Nature, the death of a body is seen as the destruction of its identity, i.e. of its modes. Next, other bodies are composed within new configurations, as will be expounded in this paper. An indifferent stance vis-à-vis death could be seen as similar to Epicurus's famous doctrine that "death is nothing to us." Descartes was familiar with the argumentation of the Atomist philosophers that is recorded in the work of Lucretius. However, he does not reproduce their physics or their doctrine concerning the soul, but argues instead that the soul is immaterial and immortal, following the Platonic tradition. Further, saying that he has found a "much easier and surer way, which is not to fear death," Descartes seems to be recognizing the fear of death, a fear of something that is by no means insignificant, but he has found a way of not allowing it to depress him.

In this paper, I will argue that the mechanical physics of his *Principia* can be seen as a contribution to emancipation from the fear of death, but that it does not suffice on its own for a complete argument concerning the liberation from this fear. Firstly, I will examine the argumentation of the ancients, particularly of Epicurus and Plato, and I will make it clear that Descartes reconstitutes philosophical arguments that had been seen as irreconcilable. Secondly, I will investigate how his physics can contribute to liberation from the fear of death, even though death does not appear in his *Principia*. Finally, I will delve into two questions: how death is explained and whether it is indeed nothing *to us*. The question of death puzzled Descartes, as is apparent in his correspondence with Chanut and particularly with Princess Elisabeth. I will argue that he endeavored to demystify the nature of death and also to give a rational conception of the immortality of the soul: a kind of immortality that is not personal in character.

### 1. *Between and Beyond the Ancients*

As is well known, a number of approaches, differing radically among themselves, have been taken to the subject of death. This is evident from

Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, where they are enumerated. The greatest gulf between these various views is that between the approaches of Plato and Epicurus. As Cicero points out, for Plato "the whole life of the philosopher is a preparation (*commentatio*) for death."<sup>2</sup> Death is not seen as something bad. Quite the opposite, for the soul in this earthly life is lacking in freedom and knowledge. Epicurus, by contrast, following Democritus, does not subscribe to the Platonic theory of immortality of the soul, and he maintains that "death is nothing to us: for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us."<sup>3</sup>

For Epicurus the world as a whole is comprised of atoms and of empty space. Further, he argues that the soul is material, made up of atoms, and dissipates when the body is destroyed. The fear of any punishment or torment that might befall us hereafter is thus entirely groundless. Moreover, for Epicurus, because after death one feels nothing and because all that is good or evil is to be found in feeling, ergo death is nothing. It is neither good nor bad.

In the *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus introduces another argument too, namely that "a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality."<sup>4</sup> In other words the awareness that we are transient beings is more consoling than intimations of immortality, which moreover, as is well known, have led to fantasies of the existence of another world, triggering a variety of fears, such as the fear of posthumous punishment in Hades.

Descartes does not appear to be arguing that death is nothing to us, professing—in other words—indifference towards the indisputable fact of death. Nor would he have agreed with the argument that death is nothing because the person who dies is henceforth without sensation, which is assumed as the basis for both good and evil. Further, he would not have subscribed to Epicurus's argument that one can be liberated from the fear of death by awareness that the soul is not immortal. Descartes does not perpetuate Epicurus's theory of the soul being comprised of fine material elements that undergo disintegration after death. At the end of the fifth part of *Discourse on Method*, he writes:

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<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I. xxx. 73–74, trans. J. E. King (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1945), 86–87.

<sup>3</sup> Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*, II, in *Epicurus, The Extant Remains*, trans. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 94–95.

<sup>4</sup> Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, *ibid.*, 84–85.

But when we know how much the beasts differ from us, we understand much better the arguments which prove that our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body, and consequently that it is not bound to die with it. And since we cannot see any other causes which destroy the soul, we are naturally led to conclude that it is immortal (AT VI 60; CSMK 141).

But Descartes provides no evidence of the immortality of the soul: he merely suggests that it is separate from the body. This does not mean that it is immortal. Since the immortality of the soul is not provable, it can therefore be seen as an uncertain and doubtful belief. In his letter of October 6, 1645 to Elisabeth he writes the following:

It is true also that knowledge of the immortality of the soul, and of the felicity of which it will be capable after this life, might give occasion to those who are tired of this life to leave it, if they were certain that they would afterwards enjoy that felicity. But no reason guarantees this, and there is nothing to show that the present life is bad except the false philosophy of Hegesias (whose book was forbidden by Ptolemy because many of his readers killed themselves).<sup>5</sup> True philosophy, on the contrary, teaches that even amid the saddest disasters and most bitter pains a man can always be content, provided that he knows how to use his reason (AT IV 315; CSMK III 272).

Descartes distinguishes the body from the soul but is doubtful of the immortality of the soul. The belief in life after death he regards not only as of uncertain basis but also as an idea that “might give occasion to those who are tired of this life to leave it,” as mentioned in the letter cited above. The life of a philosopher ought not to be a “*commentatio* for death.” It seems that a wise man is neither a defender of life after death nor a person indifferent towards death, postulating that it is nothing to him.

What, then, is the meaning of death? Since it is neither good nor nothing, it might be said that fear of it is justified by virtue of the *loss* that it entails of life in this world and the goods that one may enjoy as a living person. But this too is a commonplace notion, as mentioned in Cicero’s text, and one that induces weeping and wailing.<sup>6</sup> Lucretius, following Epicurus, ridiculed the human vanity that led people not only to amass as much property, wealth, glory and pleasure as possible in their earthly life but also to make claims for it even in their posthumous destination, worrying about whether they will continue to enjoy these advantages or whether they will be punished. For Lucretius, whose stance is evidently

<sup>5</sup> See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I. xxxiv, 83–84, op. cit., 99.

<sup>6</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I. xiii. 30, *ibid.*, 37.

not one of indifference towards death, "for whoever is born must wish to remain in life, for as long as soothing pleasure shall keep him in life."<sup>7</sup> Descartes could not have rejected an argument of this kind. Death seems to be recognized as a loss, but it cannot be regarded as something bad because it deprives a person only of the benefit of sensual enjoyment.

For Descartes, as indicated in the above letter to Elisabeth, "True philosophy, on the contrary, teaches that even amid the saddest disasters and most bitter pains a man can always be content, provided that he knows how to use his reason." We might consider that the greatest loss, that which engenders the greatest fear and insecurity, is that one cannot make proper use of one's reason and is thus prey to delusion. A contrast is presented in the above letter between the false philosophy of Hegesias, who professes that death liberates one from life's sorrows, and true philosophy, which while not disputing that life is full of sorrow, teaches that this is to be confronted rationally. Since "true philosophy" gives an account of the natural phenomena and deduces the effects from their causes,<sup>8</sup> arguably, what is involved is transference, *translatio*, of the *telos* (*finis*) from death to the investigation of the productive principles and causes of natural phenomena. What emerges out of the transference is an intellectual pleasure that becomes feasible when questions are seen as soluble: this is a *telos* that is indefinite in its duration.

A person overcomes fear through the capacity to make proper use of his reason. The source of the greatest fear must be the awareness that one can lose the ability to employ one's reason in the face of concrete questions, or that reason can be impotent. Regarded in this way, fear acquires a subject and an object: fear becomes concrete, controllable and amenable to solution, at least potentially. It is implied then that a fear is a function of both subject and object, that there are as many kinds of fear as there are combinations of subject and object of this fear. But this presupposes the distinction between subject and object, which the certainty of the existence of the thinking ego and its distinctness from the natural world has helped to make possible.

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<sup>7</sup> Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, V, 177–78, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 393.

<sup>8</sup> See René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, pt. III, art. 4, trans. V. R. Miller and R. P. Miller (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), 85: "However, the principles which we have already discovered are so vast and fertile that many more things follow from them than we see included in this visible universe, and even many more than we could mentally examine in our entire lives." (I follow the above edition for the texts cited from the *Principia philosophiae*.)

For Plato's *Phaedo* (67 d): "And that freedom and separation of the soul from the body is called death? . . . It is only those who practice philosophy in the right way, we say, who always most want to free the soul; and this release and separation of the soul from the body is the preoccupation of the philosophers?—So it appears."<sup>9</sup>

It appears that for Plato, philosophizing is not exactly a *commentatio* for death, as in Cicero's *translatio*. Further, for Descartes the separation between soul and body does not have to do with death but, with philosophy in the right way: the knowledge that can find the causes of natural phenomena such as the corruption and death of a body, and in this way liberating man from his confused representations and fears. It is a process to which philosophy, and Plato's ambiguous—at first glance—conception of "death," have indeed made a contribution. Note, however that Descartes does not show either that the soul is immortal or that it is corruptible like the body, whatever he might maintain in this connection. If he does acknowledge "a kind of" immortality, it must be of an epistemological and scientific order, which moreover is not such as to be conducive to departure from life.

In the "Synopsis" to the *Meditations*, in reference to the body-mind distinction, Descartes writes:

I have not pursued this matter any further in this work, first because these arguments are enough to show that the decay of the body does not imply the destruction of the mind, and are hence enough to give mortals the hope of an afterlife, and secondly, because the premises from which lead to the conclusion that the soul is immortal depend on an account of the whole of physics (AT, VII, 13; CSMK, II, 10).

Cartesian physics has to do with bodies, which are indeed not eternal but mutable and corruptible. But Descartes does not say that the soul is dependent on the decay of the body. He takes it for granted that the soul is something entirely distinct from the body. Its distinctness, however, is not enough to justify assumptions of immortality of the soul, as he acknowledges in his *Second Replies*:

However, you go on to say that it does not follow from the fact that the soul is distinct from the body that it is immortal, since it could still be claimed that God gave it such a nature such that its duration comes to an end simultaneously with the end of the body's life. Here I admit that I cannot refute

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 67 d, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in *Plato Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 58.

this. . . . Our natural knowledge tells that the mind is distinct from the body, and that it is a substance. But . . . the final death of a human body depends solely on a division or change of shape (AT, VII, 153; CSMK, II, 108–09).

Yet Descartes writes in the *Synopsis* that “the premises from which human immortality can be inferred depend on an account of the whole of physics.” An “account of the whole of physics” is an enormous task. Human immortality could therefore be seen as a “kind of” immortality of the soul that does not perpetuate the religious anthropomorphic conception of the soul but is of a scientific order and has to be translated or transferred into scientific language.

## 2. *Why Does Death Not Appear in the Principia?*

The next question to be examined is whether—and, if so, how—physics, i.e. the Cartesian study of the body, as formulated in the second part of the *Principia philosophiae*, can contribute to emancipation from the fear of death, or whether what is involved is a rhetorical subterfuge by means of which an attempt is made to lead the reader of the *Principia* into temptation. It is worth noting that the very question of death puzzles Descartes. This puzzlement may not be visible in the geometrically orientated *Principia* but it is implicit in his letter to Chanut and explicitly discussed in his correspondence with Elisabeth.

In his letter to Chanut he argues that “the safest way to find out how we should live is to discover first what we are,” (here we touch on a key theme in metaphysics) “what kind of world we live in and who is the creator of this world.” These are central questions of his physics also. Ethics, as presented in his famous “tree of knowledge,” depends on physics, which in turn is based on metaphysics. *Sagesse*, practical reason, is acquired through well-coordinated development of the sciences and through the interconnectedness of all knowledge, but also through the collaboration and participation of as many people as possible.<sup>10</sup> We perceive that this optimistic prospect of the Cartesian program of knowledge provided mankind with the assurance of being able to acquire the power and the knowledge to overcome his fears.

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<sup>10</sup> Descartes writes in his letter to Elisabeth, of October 6, 1645, that “if we consider ourselves as parts of some larger body, we share also in the goods that all its parts enjoy, without being deprived by that of any that are exclusively ours . . .” (AT, IV, 308; CSMK, III, 269).

Cartesian physics is the study of the body, that is, of material substance: what it is, how it behaves, how the cosmos and its contents are constituted from that material substance.<sup>11</sup> The principal attribute of material substance is extension: everything, organic or not, participates in this attribute of extension and is to be explained primarily through geometrical extension.

Cartesian physics, as formulated in the *Principia*, seeks first and foremost to investigate the conservation of the corporeal world, that is to say the conservation of quantity of motion, formulating the principle that underwrites it, and secondly to study the behavior of individual bodies and record the relevant laws determining their behavior.

The first section of the second part of the *Principia* includes an exposition of what extended substance is and a geometrical definition of motion. The conception of motion is crucial, as “all variation, in matter, that is, all the diversity of its forms depends on motion” (*Principia* II 23). A body becomes bigger or smaller, softer or harder, warm or cold, because of motion. The modifications or transformations of bodies are to be explained through motion. Descartes denies the existence of real qualities, especially if they are conceived as souls or minds, i.e. as intentional actions. On April 26, 1643, he writes to Mersenne: “Since motion is not a real quality but only a mode, it can only be conceived as the change by which a body leaves the vicinity of some others” (AT III 648; CSMK III 135–36). This notion of motion as the transference (*translatio*) of a body from the vicinity of some bodies to the vicinity of others is central to his *Principia*:

Motion is the transference (*translatio*) of one part of matter or of one body from the neighborhood (*vicinia*) of those bodies that immediately touch it and are more regarded as being at rest, and into the neighborhood of others (*Principia* II 25).

This definition makes it seem that motion is a relational mode among bodies, which “creates a serious problem, namely, how is it that the parts of matter can be individuated.”<sup>12</sup> Though it could be argued that the distinction between motion and rest is only a distinction of reason, depending entirely on our conception, Descartes does provide a distinction that

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 60.

<sup>12</sup> See Peter Machamer and J. E. McGuire, *Descartes's Changing Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 137.



does not depend on our conception, but on the genuine frame of each body.<sup>13</sup> In addition, each body has its own quantity of motion and “only one motion proper to it” (*Principia* II 31); but there is no suggestion that it keeps it, given that God conserves motion, “not always contained in the same parts of matter, but transferred from some parts to others depending on the ways in which they come in contact” (*Principia* II 42).

Descartes distinguishes the effect, motion, from its cause, the mover. He pays careful attention to the causes of motion and ultimately derives the laws of motion from its “universal and primary cause,” God. In the second section of the second part of *Principia* (article 37 to the end), Descartes attempts to formulate the fundamental laws of physics, laws that are required to be of general validity in every place and for all bodies, given that they are grounded in the immutability of divine action. He posits two motivating causes; firstly, the general and first cause, which derives from God, and secondly the laws of motion, through which the first cause is imparted to the world. God, “the most eternal of all possible truths,”<sup>14</sup> is represented as the efficient and total cause that *ensures the stability and the conservation of this quantity of matter and motion*: This is the key argument of Cartesian physics. The principal cause serves moreover to underwrite the secondary or individual laws on the basis of which nature operates. Certainty vis-à-vis the laws that will be postulated by Cartesian physics for individual bodies is dependent on the first principle, which guarantees conservation of material-corporeal substance in general. The first principle thus provides the certainty and security that the world as a whole will be conserved, just as this quantity of motion will be conserved, favoring dispensation from the fear that the world in which the human being is enclosed will be destroyed.

The first two laws have to do with the conservation of individual bodies. In accordance with the *first law*, “each thing, as far as it is in its power, always remains (*perseveret*) in the same state; consequently, when it is once moved, it always continues to move” (AT, II, 37). This law is hypothetical: that is to say, if one abstracts the factor of mutual influence from other bodies, i.e. the contingency that something else might bring about some change in it, a body always remains in the same state. Under the first law, a state of body like size, shape, motion, or rest will persist until

<sup>13</sup> See Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics*, 166–71.

<sup>14</sup> In his letter to Mersenne of May 6, 1630, Descartes writes: “The existence of God is the first and most eternal of all possible truths and one from which alone all others proceed” (AT, I, 150; CSMK, III, 24).

something causes it to change.<sup>15</sup> This implies that if something is moving, its tendency is not towards immobility as maintained by scholastic Aristotelian physics. This law implies for Descartes that a body does not tend of its own accord towards its destruction: “nothing moves by virtue of its own nature toward its opposite or its own destruction” (ibid).

The *second* natural law confirms that “all movement is, of itself, along straight lines; and consequently, bodies which are moving in a circle always tend to move away from the center of the circle which they are describing” (AT, II, 39). This law pertains to simple bodies, which are regarded as having of their own accord the tendency to move in straight lines and not along complicated trajectories. If a body happens to find itself in a circular motion, it tends away from the center of rotation. Bodies in motion around a center exert a centrifugal force, and it is excluded that the “natural” motion is circular, as Descartes’s teachers had taught.

The *third law* governs transfer of motion among bodies, describing what happens to two bodies when they meet or collide. It prescribes “that a body, upon coming in contact with a stronger one, loses none of its motion; but that, upon coming in contact with a weaker one, it loses as much as it transfers to that weaker body” (AT, II, 40). This law is accompanied by a subsequent demonstration, and it is followed by seven rules describing instances of collisions between bodies and serving as examples of the calculation of their behavior and of the effects of collision. Bodies are described in terms of motion and rest, rapidity of motion and slowness of motion, direction, determination, and size. None of the examples described involve destruction of one body by another, but in the event that one body “wins” by drawing a body in its direction, it transfers—as outlined in the third rule—one half of its additional speed to the “loser.” This presupposes “a law of nature that if one body moves another, then the former must have more power to move the latter than the latter has to resist being moved by the former. But this surplus can depend only on the size of the body. For the motionless body has as many degrees of resistance as the moving body has degrees of speed,” as Descartes writes to Clerselier on February 17, 1645 (AT, IV, 183–84; CSMK, III, 246).

The third law, illustrated by seven rules, is subject to the first principle of overall conservation, and presupposes the two preceding laws of conservation and the persistence of motion, as well as the law concerning the tendency of bodies to move in a straight line. Collisions are local, intro-

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<sup>15</sup> Garber, *Descartes’ Metaphysical Physics*, 214.

ducing no change to the overall quantity of motion. Whether the initial force of each body is conserved or whether the more "powerful" gains ascendancy over the "weaker" but on account of the latter's resistance transfers part of its power to it, what is actualized is a "counterbalancing," a redistribution of force involving no change in the overall amount of motion. The implication is also that the more powerful body does not acquire even greater force. In the context of collisions no individual body is able to acquire overwhelming supremacy.

As we have seen, physics involves an abstraction of thought from the body, an experiment comparable to that performed with thought itself. An attempt is made through such abstraction to study the behavior of bodies, elaborating the appropriate concepts and formulating the laws that govern them. According to the first and second law, nothing tends towards its own destruction. Everything tends to conserve the state in which it finds itself. No fear for the possible non-existence of a body is allowed for in these laws. Quite the opposite in fact. But they are formulated in abstraction from interactions with other bodies. This raises the problem of how the bodies behave when they meet or collide. Under the third law, collisions between bodies involve increases and decreases in the force they exert, without this jeopardizing the conservation of the whole to which they are subject. Each body therefore persists in the situation in which it finds itself. It moves in a single direction and should it encounter another body coming from the opposite direction, the result is a collision. This looks at first sight like a never-ending series of *translationes* of colliding bodies.

Descartes's purpose is not merely to assess the contending forces, describing the impacts between them and representing nature as a situation of generalized collisions. His quest for rules suggests that he is seeking to achieve an understanding of the change (*mutatio*) that emerges out of collisions. Such change can induce interactions between bodies whereby one body channels a proportion of its motion, insofar as it is greater, into moving the other. If it does not do so, there will be a net gain or loss of motion. The study takes as one of its presuppositions the principle of economy of change and it should be borne in mind that the power of resistance of bodies<sup>16</sup> is among the contributing factors underlying

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<sup>16</sup> In his Letter to Clerselier of February 17, 1645, Descartes writes, "When two bodies having in them incompatible manners of behavior come into collision, there must undoubtedly occur some mutation of these modes to render them compatible, but this mutation must always be as slight as possible. In other words if they can become compatible

this principle. God is represented as deciding and acting through laws and rules without particularly favoring any specific body, because this would jeopardize preservation of the whole. God, as legislator and guarantor of the laws is unconcerned with the question of the outcome in relation to each body taken separately, and this unconcern is required for the equilibrium and the stability of the whole.

The natural world has not been made for the sake either of human beings or of particular bodies. Further, an anthropocentric conception of nature would lead both to scientific errors and to faulty value judgments.<sup>17</sup> The extinction of mankind is not something that could be projected in the *Principia*, because it reflects an outlook that is not anthropocentric, according priority to preservation of the whole. In line with this conception, in his letter to Elisabeth of September 15, 1645, Descartes states that “each one is really one of the many parts of the universe, and more particularly a part of the earth, the state, the society and the family to which he belongs. . . . And the interests of the whole, of which each of us is a part, must be always preferred to those of our particular person—with measure, of course and discretion” (AT, IV, 293; CSMK, III, 266).

Within the framework of Descartes’s mechanistic physics all bodies, whether organic or inorganic, are modes of the geometrical extension, which is assumed as their “essence,” and they are ordained by the same mechanical laws of motion. What we have regarded as disaster for an individual thing will be similarly comprehensible as a physical occurrence from the viewpoint of Nature, or as really being nothing for us insofar as we see things from the viewpoint of God or of Nature. From this

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through the mutation of a certain quantity of these modes, a greater quantity will surmount the mutation. And it should be noted that there are two different modes of motion: one of them is just motion, or speed, and the other is the determination of this motion to be steered in a certain direction. Each of these is as difficult to change as the other” (AT, IV, 185; CSMK, III, 247).

Concerning the Principle of Least Modal Mutation (PLMM), Descartes’s version of the economy principle and the discussion on it, see Alan Gabbey, “Force and Inertia in the 17th Century: Descartes and Newton,” in *Descartes: Philosophy, Mathematics and Physics*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Sussex: The Harvester Press), 263f.

<sup>17</sup> In the *Principles of Philosophy*, III, 3, op. cit., 85, Descartes argues that “from a moral point of view, it may be a pious thought to believe that God created all things for us, since this may move us all the more to love Him and to give thanks to Him for so many blessings . . . it is, however, in no way likely that all things were made for us in the sense that God had no other purpose in creating them. And it would be clearly ridiculous to attempt to use such an opinion to support reasonings about Physics; for we cannot doubt that there are many things which are currently in the world, or which were formerly here and have already entirely ceased to exist, which no man has ever seen or known or used.”

viewpoint, it could indeed be regarded as without importance, or as “nothing,” to quote the words of Epicurus and of Lucretius, because no consideration is evoked that might justify fear or be a source of fear. Moreover, the retention of undifferentiated—at first sight—geometric extension is supported by a framework of regulation that is governed by *ordo*, by a primeval “divine” principle, by laws and rules. It might be thought that order in this system embodies regulatory principles and values: first and foremost the value of maintaining wholeness, secondly the tendency of every thing to remain in the state in which it finds itself, as long as this resistance favors not only itself but also preservation of the whole.

The fear of death can be overcome, to some extent, provided one can divest oneself of childhood prejudices, that is to say of a diversity of imaginings concerning death, and provided one lives in a world that is safe, comprehensible and just. It may be thought that although Descartes himself acknowledges the incomplete nature of his physics, he nevertheless makes a contribution along these lines. But as we shall subsequently analyze, he does not appear truly indifferent towards the specific value of human life and people's fear of losing it or finding it abbreviated, and he was not entirely in agreement that death is nothing *to us* as distinct subjects.

### 3. *How is Death to Be Explained? Is It Nothing to Us?*

Although in the *Principia* there is no death and no tears of grief, individual bodies nevertheless decay and are lost. In his *Second Replies* in reference to bodily death, he gives the following explanation:

Our natural knowledge tells us that the mind is distinct from the body, and that it is a substance. But in the case of the human body, the difference between it and other bodies consists merely in the arrangement of limbs and other accidents of this sort; and the final death of the body depends solely on a division or change of shape (AT, VII, 153; CSMK, II, 109).

A division in the shape of an extended, material body can bring about the destruction of this body. In reality death is to be understood as one kind of change of the form or the structure of the body. For example, if a ball is flattened, it loses its identity, it ceases to be spherical, but the material that comprises it is not lost. Furthermore, in the above quotation, Descartes maintains that destruction of the body does not also entail destruction of the soul, given that the soul is distinct from the body and characteristics of the body, such as the shape, do not pertain to it.

Neither is the soul destroyed together with the body, nor is the cause of death to be sought for in the soul. As he explains in the *Passions of the Soul*, death “never occurs through the absence of the soul, but only because one of the principal parts of the body decays” (AT, XI, 330; CSMK, I, 329). In reference to mistaken conceptions concerning that subject, he writes as follows:

The error consists in supposing that since dead bodies are devoid of heat and movement, it is the absence of the soul which causes this cessation of movement and heat. Thus it has been believed, without justification, that our natural heat and all the movements of our bodies depend on the soul; whereas we ought to hold, on the contrary, that the soul takes its leave only because this heat ceases and the organs which bring about bodily movement decay (ibid., article 5).

Descartes, as is well known, rejected the hylozoism of the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition, and as concerns heat, he believed that the explanation for it is independent of the soul and must have its basis in motion, given that “all variation, in matter, that is, all the diversity of its forms depends on motion” (*Principia*, II, 23). The organ which causes this heat—Descartes tells us elsewhere—is the heart.<sup>18</sup> In the *Description of the Human Body* he writes that “heat in the heart is like the great spring or principle responsible for all the movements occurring in the machine. The veins are pipes which conduct the blood from all the parts of the body towards the heart, where it serves to fuel the heat there” (AT, XI, 226; CSMK, I, 316). It is not just a question of a literary simile comparing the heart to a *great spring* and the human body to a machine. As he points out in his *Passions of the Soul*, the difference between “the body of a living man and that of a dead man is just like the difference between, on the one hand, a watch or other automaton when it is wound up and contains in itself the corporeal principle of the movements for which it is designated, together with everything else required for its operation; and, on the other hand, the same watch or machine when it is broken and the principle of its movement ceases to be active” (AT, XI, 331; CSMK, I, 329–30).

The human body is presented as if it were no different from a machine: an object for investigation by mechanistic physics, like anything else, whether organic or inorganic, and from this perspective its death can be considered as much a matter of indifference as that of a machine that

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<sup>18</sup> Fred Ablondi, “Death according to Descartes: Why the Soul Leaves the Body,” *Iyyun. The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1995), 48–49.

does not function. And given that as a machine it is subject to utilization and manipulation—as it habitually occurs—then the question undoubtedly arises as to how an ethically proper orientation to life, which must involve the body also, can be based on mechanistic physics. The distanced stance of the wise observer is necessary, however, if one is to emancipate oneself from myths and conceptions not monitored by the intellect, given that—as may readily be ascertained—“we are usually more persuaded by custom and example than by any certain knowledge” (AT, IV, 10; HR, 87). One basic prerequisite, as indicated, for emancipation from the fear of death, which is to be numbered among the passions of the soul, is that one should have divested oneself of childhood prejudices, that to say of diverse imaginings concerning death and another world; and mechanistic physics has a contribution to make towards achievement of this liberation. Freedom from the fear of death is of central importance in the Cartesian ethics. It is an ethics based on physics, that is to say on knowledge of reality, but also on metaphysics, the knowledge of what we are—a precondition for the formulation of sound judgments. It is moreover recognized that in the modern world, more than in antiquity or the Middle Ages, investigation of nature is carried out in such a way as to embrace the artifact, as an object of science and also of craft: Ethics, therefore, as a task and a duty of science, must include the world of the machine, and not as something foreign or diabolical.

Physics can contribute to liberation from fear, but is not enough in itself. For mechanistic physics and astronomy, “the earth is a mere point”<sup>19</sup> and the destruction of a human body an occurrence of negligible significance. But from the perspective of the human being as a sentient creature with both mind and body, it evokes a variety of representations and feelings, which are projected as if they were of primary importance. This outlook was not unknown to Descartes—he put forward the notion after all that he himself suffered anxiety at the thought of death,<sup>20</sup> and a rational stance was something that very much preoccupied him.

We should never give up something certain for the sake of acquiring something uncertain: from which it seems to me to follow that although we should not seriously fear death, we should equally never seek it. (AT, IV, 332; CSMK, III, 277)

<sup>19</sup> See *Letter to Elisabeth* of November 3, 1645 (AT, IV, 333–34; CSMK, III, 277).

<sup>20</sup> See Nicole Fabre, *L'inconscient de Descartes* (Paris: Bayard, 2003), 60f.



The stance vis-à-vis death is a question of ethics. And indeed, as Descartes writes to Mersenne, “One of the main points in my ethical life is to love life without fearing death” (AT, II, 480–81; CSMK, III, 131). We perceive that love of life must include concern for the body; it is well known that the body-mind union preoccupied him particularly, since for Descartes the soul was not only distinct and separate from the body, but simultaneously one with it, and he did not see the body “as a sailor perceives by sight if anything in his ship is broken” (AT, VII, 81; CSMK, II, 56). The sensations, the emotions and the passions bear witness to this union. It is through them that a man feels pain when the body is hurt. He feels the decay of the body. He sees, feels, and mourns the death of a loved one.

Though recognizing the beneficial character of the function of passions for informing the soul, he nevertheless argues that fear or terror cannot ever be praiseworthy or useful. “It too, is not a specific passion, but merely an excess of timidity, wonder and anxiety—an excess which is always bad.”<sup>21</sup> What is proposed is that passions should be resolved by means of reflection and through the medium of intellectual or internal emotions, such as *joie intellectuelle* and *l’âme raisonnable*. It is worth noting that the resolution they propose through the medium of *joie intellectuelle* is to be effected reflectively employing the example of the theater and the man mourning the death of his wife.<sup>22</sup> Descartes seeks to expose what goes on backstage at the theater, what is motivating those who perform, the causes of—and the reasons for—their actions. The resolution of the drama would not be able to unfold through the medium of intellect, the basic component and function of *mens*, but through *animus*, the *âme raisonnable*, which mediates between the passions of the soul and the intellectual part of the mind (*mens*). If the *Principia* are written from the perspective of *mens*—that which observes (*spectat*), perceives and comprehends—for resolution of the passions and emancipation from them all of the mental faculties and body-mind, powers must be summoned, as far as possible and to the extent possible, in collaboration and coordination with mutual reflectivity. It is not, therefore, adequate consciousness to be simply aware that the world is infinite and oneself a tiny inconsequential speck in the overall framework of cosmic order, when one sees and feels that one’s powers are dwindling or when one witnesses the death of a loved one, events which can arouse fear in the

<sup>21</sup> Descartes, *Les Passions de l’âme*, art. 176: AT, XI, 463; CSMK, I, 392.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., art. 147: AT, XI, 440–41; CSMK, I, 381.



person concerned. Death cannot possibly be anything *to us*. It is in any case worth noting that while in the *Principia* there is no mention of death, Descartes discusses the subject in his correspondence, expressing himself in the first person, and making it a theme for discussion in *The Passions of the Soul*. Emancipation from the fear of death requires both the perspective of nature to demystify it and the human perspective, two different orientations. Because death is a subject that is accorded a variety of interpretative approaches it demands a multifaceted mode of approaching it, the interconnection of all the sciences, mobilization of all of humanity's intellectual and mental resources.

Death is to be understood as a change in the identity of a body, namely of its modes, within the overall pattern of the world's movement. Changes in the mode of existence of individual bodies, with disintegration of their structures, are unavoidable and to be understood in the context of the infinite divisibility and differentiation of material, whose movement never ceases, as is illustrated in the endless *translatio* of bodies, of their reciprocal separations and decompositions. In the Cartesian *Principles* there is no death, no tears of grief, although individual bodies nevertheless decay and are lost, as other bodies make their appearance within new configurations:<sup>23</sup> "the mind," as indicated in the "Synopsis" to *Meditations*, "is immortal by its very nature" (AT, VII, 14; CSMK, III, 10). It could be asserted that Descartes in his theory of the body and the soul is reconstituting philosophical arguments that had been considered irreconcilable.

As a materialist, Lucretius believed that humans did not have immaterial souls but rather minds or "spirits" that are composed of fine matter. Epicurus's proposition that "death is nothing to us" is reasonable for Lucretius, as "the nature of the mind is understood to be mortal."<sup>24</sup> Lucretius entertains the possibility that "the matter that composes us should be reassembled by time after our death and brought back into its present state," but concludes that even if after bodily death, one were to be replicated, the replica would "be no concern of ours once the chain of our identity (*repetentia*) had been snapped."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See *Principles of Philosophy* III 3; op. cit., 85: "For we cannot doubt that there are many things which are currently in the world, or which were formerly here and have already entirely ceased to exist, which no man has ever seen or known or used."

<sup>24</sup> Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, III, 830 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 253.

<sup>25</sup> Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, III 846–37, following the translation cited in Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *The Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3–4.

Although the Atomist philosophers, too, rejected the idea of continuity not only of the body but also of the soul after death, the above hypothesis based on the theory of indestructible atoms was arguable. Lucretius of course rejected even in this hypothetical case the possibility of personal continuity after death, because of the loss of memory, which he introduces as a criterion for the identification of a person through time.

For Descartes a person is to be understood as a single individual being consisting of body and mind.<sup>26</sup> His theory of the body shares common features with the ideas of the Atomist philosophers, differing however on basic points because there is no acceptance of the theory of the atom and of the void.<sup>27</sup> Material extension does not consist of atoms, but is continuous, divisible into an infinity of parts; every part of matter is divisible (*Principia* I 26; AT, III, 477) and since body is continuous, it is divisible in an infinite number of ways, a division that goes to infinity and never comes to end, so far as we can know.<sup>28</sup> Because the body does not consist of atoms there can be no formulating of hypotheses according to which following its destruction it could return to the components from which it is constituted. "If a stone melts or it is reduced to the finest possible powder, it will lose hardness but will not thereby cease to be a body" (*Principia*, II, 11). Insofar as the stone as part of the infinite extension of matter is infinitely divisible, its material will be perpetuated via other combinations of bodies, endlessly. Moreover after the destruction of the body, the soul abandons it, and the history of each body and soul must be continued separately. It cannot, on the basis of Cartesian theory, be maintained that a person as an individual body-mind entity can remain in existence after the death of the body.

But the soul, contrary to Lucretius's theory, is distinct from the body and not in its essence material. It is regarded as immortal "by nature." As we have seen, Descartes does not directly reject the immortality of the soul. But neither does he prove it. Given Descartes's belief that it should be provable on the basis of physics, the question of the immortality of the soul has to be translated into scientific terms and arguments. This way liberates the capacity of mind to produce ideas and formulate propositions

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<sup>26</sup> See Udo Thiel, "Personal Identity," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. D. Garber and M. Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 873.

<sup>27</sup> See Garber, *op. cit.*, 117–55.

<sup>28</sup> Garber, *ibid.*, 122–23.

that are transmitted beyond the changes and the decay of a person's body: a kind of immortality that is not personal in character.

This outlook is not suited to providing consolation for the person who continues to fear death. It would be difficult however for this type of immortality to lead a person to opt out of life. Its tendency would be in the direction of formulating, and attempting to formulate, ideas and proposals that are of ever greater clarity and distinctness.



TRANSLATING *SUB SPECIE AETERNITATIS* IN SPINOZA:  
PROBLEMS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Pina Totaro

The reflection on eternity spans Spinoza's entire philosophical thought, touching here and there on the fields of ethics, logic, epistemology, ontology and theology. But only through the convergence of these various levels of reading can we look at eternity as the definitive result of an analysis of human cognitive structures, particularly the intellect. Having initially postulated the problem of the emendation of the intellect, Spinoza establishes as the final goal and ultimate happiness for mankind that third kind of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, that gnosiological level which overlaps the metaphysical beyond and outside of a temporality separated into successions of before and after. Intuitive awareness in fact negates any temporal progression and allows us to look at eternity as the negation of the linear passing of time, or rather as the negation of an eternity intended as an infinite span of time.

The *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, the body of work in which Spinoza manifests his research's perspectives and aims, opens with a reflection regarding the possibility of man acquiring such a condition of firmness and stability that he may enjoy for all eternity a continuous and enormous sense of happiness: "summa in aeternum fruere laetitia."<sup>1</sup> Happiness is here presented in relation to the idea of a permanent state in which the individual is able to remove himself from the reign of an ephemeral and transitory happiness, of an essentially transitory nature. Happiness and unhappiness depend only, in fact, on the "quality of the object with which love binds itself," such that while love for the more transitory assets such as good fortune, honor and wealth subjects us to every sort of sadness and conflicting passion, only the love of that which is eternal and infinite ("amor erga rem aeternam, & infinitam") truly

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<sup>1</sup> Spinoza, *Opera*, Im Auftrage der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, hrsg. von Carl Gebhardt, Heidelberg, C. Winters Universität, 1925; rist. anast.: 4 voll., Heidelberg, C. Winters Universität, 1972 [G]. In my text, I will use the following abbreviations of Spinoza's works: *E*: *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*; *KV*: *Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand*; *TIE*: *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*. For the quotation, cf. G, II, 5, 15–16.

nourishes and fills the soul with joy, and thus proves itself as the only worthwhile object of our desires.

In addition to the moral character of this research, which portrays eternity as the answer to man's need to appease his pursuit of happiness, we find in Spinoza's work the mention of a need which is also of a logical nature and which Spinoza elaborates on referring to the Cartesian concept of eternal life, expressible both in the positive and negative sense:

By an eternal truth, I mean that which being positive could never become negative. Thus it is a primary and eternal truth that God exists, but it is not an eternal truth that Adam thinks. That the Chimaera does not exist is an eternal truth, that Adam does not think is not so.<sup>2</sup>

Resuming and extrapolating the definition of eternal truth presented by Descartes, Spinoza intends by eternal truth a necessary idea, or rather, the statute of necessity that implies such an idea and that entails, for example, the absolute necessity to exist (§ 67). If the truly eternal truths lie, according to Spinoza, in the intellect ("verum, sive intellectus,")<sup>3</sup> eternity is then characterized by existing independently of any other causes, all of which remain external and irrelevant to the eternal. Supporting this logical necessity implied by the *aeternum*, we find in the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* a deliberation of a rather epistemological nature, inasmuch as human awareness can be regarded as an order strictly connected to the notion of *aeternum*. To know means in fact to proceed from one entity to another along a set of causes which are eternally in place. This set copies nature itself and of nature constitutes the "essentia, & ordo, & unio."<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting, however, that by "set of causes and actual entities," Spinoza doesn't intend the set of mutable and transitory things, perceived by the imagination, sources of error and of random and accidental sensations, but rather only that which is both permanent and eternal, or rather the innermost essence of things, in which are written the laws of nature itself, of which they are a part:

But it must be observed that, by the series of causes and real entities, I do not here mean the series of particular and mutable things, but only the series of fixed and eternal things. It would be impossible for human infinity

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<sup>2</sup> "Per aeternam veritatem talem intelligo, quae, si est affirmativa, nunquam poterit esse negativa. Sic prima, & aeterna veritas est, Deum esse, non autem est aeterna veritas, Adamum cogitare. Chimaeram non esse, est aeterna veritas, non autem, Adamum non cogitare" (*TIE*, § 54; G, II, 20, 33–35, note n).

<sup>3</sup> G, II, 26, 14.

<sup>4</sup> G, II, 36, 13.

to follow up the series of particular mutable things, both on account of their multitude, surpassing all calculation, and on account of the infinitely diverse circumstances surrounding one and the same thing, any one of which may be the cause of its existence or non-existence. Indeed, their existence has no connection with their essence, or (as we have said already) is not an eternal truth. Neither is there any need that we should understand their series, for the essences of particular mutable things are not to be gathered from their series or order of existence, which would furnish us with nothing beyond their extrinsic denominations, their relations, or, at most, their circumstances, all of which are very different from their inmost essence. This inmost essence must be sought solely from fixed and eternal things, and from the laws, inscribed (so to speak) in those things as in their true codes, according to which all particular things take place and are arranged; nay, these mutable particular things depend so intimately and essentially (so to phrase it) upon the fixed things, that they cannot either be conceived without them.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning with the logical establishment of the order of deduction, here Spinoza traces the fundamental lines of his ontology: *aeternum* assumes the value of *res fixa* which, though singular, functions as a “universal,” behaving as if it were a general term in the definitions of that which is singular and mutable. In that which is eternal, in fact, single entities are *simul* nature (“Ordo autem, ut unum ante aliud intelligatur, uti diximus, non est petendus ab eorum existendi serie, neque etiam a rebus aeternis. Ibi enim omnia haec sunt simul natura”).<sup>6</sup> This “simultaneous being” as

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<sup>5</sup> “Sed notandum, me hic per seriem causarum, & realium entium non intelligere seriem rerum singularium mutabilium, sed tantummodo seriem rerum fixarum aeternarumque. Seriem enim rerum singularium mutabilium impossibile foret humanae imbecillitati assequi, cum propter earum omnem numerum superantem multitudinem, tum propter infinitas circumstantias in una & eadem re, quorum unaquaeque potest esse causa, ut res existat; quandoquidem earum existentia nullam habet connexionem cum earundem essentia, sive (ut jam diximus) non est aeterna veritas. Verumenimvero neque etiam opus est, ut earum seriem intelligamus: siquidem rerum singularium mutabilium essentiae non sunt depromendae ab earum serie, sive ordine existendi; cum hic nihil aliud nobis praebeat preter denominationes extrinsecas, relatione, aut ad summum circumstantias; quae omnia longe absunt ab intima essentia rerum. Haec vero tantum est petenda a fixis, atque aeternis rebus, & simul a legibus in iis rebus, tanquam in suis veris codicibus, inscriptis, secundum quas omnia singularia, & fiunt, & ordinantur; imo haec mutabilia singularia adeo intime, atque essentialiter (ut sic dicam) ab iis fixis pendent, ut sine iis nec esse, nec concipi possint. Unde haec fixa, & aeterna, quamvis sint singularia, tamen ob eorum ubique praesentiam, ac latissimam potentiam ertunt nobis, tanquam universalis, sive genera definitionum rerum singularium mutabilium, & causae proximae omnium rerum” (G, II, 36, 20–37, 9).

<sup>6</sup> G, II, 37, 13–15. *Simul natura* can be intended here as “in the same time by nature,” “all together by nature” or, in a completely different way, “all together the nature,” but it is no way to discuss here the different interpretation of this point.

stated by the expression *simul natura* has the sense of the statute of the eternal, which carries the eternal laws by which the singular and mutable are determined to exist and function in a certain way. But such *res aeternae* can be drawn upon only by an intellect emended through having reached a certain self-awareness of its own properties and strengths, or rather its own nature, which constitutes the *forma veritatis*.<sup>7</sup>

To the properties which properly belong to the nature of the intellect (rather than to moral categories) and which determine the strength and power as measured by its potential, Spinoza adds the ability to conceive (*percipere*) things not as subject to time (“non tam sub duratione”), but rather “sub quadam specie aeternitatis . . . & numero infinito”: “It perceives things not so much under the condition of duration as under a certain form of eternity, and in an infinite number.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, if the intellect “regards neither quantity or duration,” with the imagination we perceive things according to “defined numbers and established durations and quantities.” Regarding duration as quantity remains for Spinoza a function of the imagination, as he will repeat in other parts of the *Ethica*, where we also reencounter the formula *sub specie aeternitatis*, though articulated differently.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the meaning of the expression is tied to the idea of necessity, that is, to the way reason brings things back to the same necessity of divine nature. Said divine nature permits the perception of things “in eternity,” or through “a certain form of eternity.” The expression *sub specie aeternitatis* has in fact been translated with the phrases “of the form,” “of a form,” “of a certain form” or “from the perspective of eternity.” If, therefore, through the imagination things are perceived as defined quantities and numerically set within a determined duration, only the intellect has the property of thinking outside of spatial-temporal limitations in order to open itself to a dimension of eternity and infinity. From this new perspective, eternity appears not only to be a theological or moral category, but also a positive property of thought (*cogitatio*), able to conceive of the intellect itself and its other properties: its strength, its power and ability to establish links and functions, to execute simulations and elaborate abstract arrangements and manipulations of data. With this ends the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, a work in which the critique of the emendation of the intellect revolves entirely

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<sup>7</sup> *TIE*, § 105; G, II, 38, 2–12.

<sup>8</sup> G, II, 39, 16–17.



around the concept of eternity as the need to extricate the intellect from the realm of the temporal.

A similar concurrence between the epistemological and the ontological field can be found in the XVII letter to Lodowijk Meyer on April 20, 1663, in which, among other things, confronting the notion of eternity, Spinoza refers to two modes of perception and therefore to two distinct ways of conceiving of quantity, two different approaches which evince, on the one hand, the verifiability of a division of the extended substance and, on the other, the impossibility of defining substance and eternity if not as infinite:

If you ask, why we are by nature so prone to attempt to divide extended substance, I answer, that quantity is conceived by us in two ways, namely, by abstraction or superficially, as we imagine it by the aid of the senses, or as substance, which can only be accomplished through the understanding. So that, if we regard quantity as it exists in the imagination (and this is the more frequent and easy method), it will be found to be divisible, finite, composed of parts, and manifold. But, if we regard it as it is in the understanding, and the thing be conceived as it is in itself (which is very difficult), it will then . . . be found to be infinite, indivisible, and single. . . . Whence it is clearly to be seen, that measure, time, and number, are merely modes of thinking, or, rather, of imagining. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that all, who have endeavored to understand the course of nature, by means of such notions, and without fully understanding even them, have entangled themselves so wondrously, that they have at last only been able to extricate themselves by breaking through every rule and admitting absurdities even of the grossest kind. For there are many things which cannot be conceived through the imagination but only through the understanding, for instance, substance, eternity, and the like; thus, if any one tries to explain such things by means of conceptions which are mere aids to the imagination, he is simply assisting his imagination to run away with him.<sup>9</sup>

In this sense Spinoza defines numbers, measures and time as “mere aids to the imagination” not to be confused with reality and “ignoring [thus] the very nature of things,” the latter being only conceivable through the intellect.

An exact reproposal of the expression *sub specie aeternitatis* can also be found in the *Ethica* and particularly in the fifth part where there can be found nineteen instances. Recorded, as is seen, once in the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, the slightly modified formula, *sub quadam aeternitatis specie*, is present twice in the second part of the *Ethica* and once in

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<sup>9</sup> G IV, 56, 23–57, 17.

the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. In the fourth part of the *Ethica*, we find the variant *sub aeternitatis, seu necessitatis specie*,<sup>10</sup> which emphasizes the bond of necessity that characterizes eternity.

Spinoza establishes the statute of eternity among the first eight definitions of his “metaphysics,” which revolves entirely around the relationship between the intellect and eternity as the essential circumstance of the gnosiological-ontological dynamic determined in the *Ethica*:

By eternity, I mean existence itself, in so far as it is conceived necessarily to follow solely from the definition of that which is eternal. *Explanation.* Existence of this kind is conceived as an eternal truth, like the essence of a thing, and, therefore, cannot be explained by means of continuance or time, though continuance may be conceived without a beginning or end.<sup>11</sup>

In the first part of his work, Spinoza first of all informs us that there are two ways to conceive things and, in the example cited, particularly the concept of quantity: in one way, abstractly, as occurs when we imagine a determined quantity, and in the other way without the aid of the imagination, in substance, by the intellect.<sup>12</sup> Conceived of through the imagination, this quantity appears finite, divisible, separable into parts; conceived of through the intellect, instead, it is found to be infinite, unique and indivisible.<sup>13</sup> But even quantity, like everything else, is within God, and in

<sup>10</sup> On these subjects cf.: Filippo Mignini, “Sub specie aeternitatis. Notes sur Ethique V, propositions 22–23, 29–31,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 219 (1994), 41–54; Piero Di Vona, *La conoscenza “sub specie aeternitatis” nell’opera di Spinoza* (Lofredo: Napoli, 1995); Chantal Jaquet, “Sub specie aeternitatis”: *étude des concepts de temps, durée et éternité chez Spinoza* (Kimé: Paris, 1997); Filippo Mignini, “Sub quadam aeternitatis specie.” *Significato e problemi di un sintagma spinoziano*, in Fabrizio Meroi (ed.), *Con l’ali dell’intelletto* (Olschki: Firenze, 2005), 209–35.

<sup>11</sup> “Per aeternitatem intelligo ipsam existentiam, quatenus ex sola rei aeternae definitione necessario sequi concipitur. Explicatio. Talis enim existentia, ut aeterna veritas, sicut rei essentia, concipitur, proptereaque per durationem, aut tempus explicari non potest, tametsi duratio principio, et sine carere concipiatur” (*E I*, def. 8 expl.; *G*, II, 46, 13–19).

<sup>12</sup> *E I*, pr. 15 sch.

<sup>13</sup> *E I*, pr. 15 sch.: “Si quis tamen jam quaerat, cur nos ex natura ita propensi simus ad dividendam quantitatem? ei respondeo, quod quantitas duobus modis a nobis concipitur, abstracte scilicet, sive superficialiter, prout nempe ipsam . . . imaginamur, vel ut substantia, quod a solo intellectu . . . fit. Si itaque ad quantitatem attendimus, prout in imaginatione est, quod saepe, et facilius a nobis fit, reperietur finita, divisibilis, et ex partibus conflata; si autem ad ipsam, prout in intellectu est, attendimus, et eam, quatenus substantia est, concipimus, quod difficillime fit, tum, ut jam satis demonstravimus, infinita, unica, et indivisibilis reperietur. Quod omnibus, qui inter imaginationem, et intellectum distinguere sciverint, satis manifestum erit: Praecipue si ad hoc etiam attendatur, quod materia ubique eadem est, nec partes in eadem distinguuntur” (*G*, II, 59, 20–33).

whichever way we conceive of it, it forever follows the necessities of its own nature and is therefore eternal and infinite. Similarly eternity, like infinity, belongs to substance and as substance cannot be separated or divided. In this way the triangle, in being a triangle, is divisible and its parts can be separated from each other, but in being substance, through its nature follows “from eternity and for eternity that its three interior angles are equal to two right angles.”<sup>14</sup> The idea of eternity is therefore tied in this first part of the *Ethica* to that of necessity and immutability, two concepts that define the notion of law and eternal truth, just as thought, being an attribute of God, must necessarily exist, be immutable and not have a set existence, or rather a duration. From an absolute point of view, it expresses infinity and the necessity of existence, “or rather, precisely, eternity.”<sup>15</sup> In this way all that, through having a quality of God, follows the necessity of its absolute nature cannot have a set existence, or rather a duration,<sup>16</sup> and is therefore infinite and eternal.<sup>17</sup>

A veritable definition of eternity is established in the *Ethica* in the form of a critique on the existence of a “will” of God. God in fact could not have created the world differently than he did, in no other way or order, and if he could, if he could have sanctioned his decrees in different times and not from eternity, it would suggest a time of absence of those decrees and therefore an absence and inconsistency in God. In eternity, instead, there is “no such thing as when, before, or after” (“in aeterno non detur quando, ante, nec post”).<sup>18</sup> Eternity and infinity belong to extension and thought as attributes of God, which express his “eternal and infinite essence,” given that “substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance, comprehended now through one attribute, now through the other.”<sup>19</sup> From here we can arrive at the understanding of this identity through different kinds of knowledge, and depending on the type of knowledge, we contemplate things through their “common notions” and the *ideae adaequatae* of their properties. Such a kind of knowledge

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<sup>14</sup> *E* I, pr. 17 sch.: “Verum ego me satis clare ostendisse puto . . . a summa Dei potentia, sive infinita natura infinita infinitis modis, hoc est, omnia necessario effluxisse, vel semper eadem necessitate sequi, eodem modo, ac ex natura trianguli ab aeterno, et in aeternum sequitur, ejus tres angulos aequari duobus rectis. Quare Dei omnipotentia actu ab aeterno fuit, et in aeternum in eadem actualitate manebit. Et hoc modo Dei omnipotentia longe, meo quidem iudicio, perfectior statuitur.”

<sup>15</sup> *E* I, pr. 23, dem.

<sup>16</sup> *E* I, pr. 21, dem.

<sup>17</sup> *E* I, pr. 28, dem.

<sup>18</sup> *G*, II, 75, 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> *E* II, pr. 7, sch.

permits us to perceive things *sub quadam specie aeternitatis*,<sup>20</sup> or rather to contemplate them as necessary and not as contingent, with the same necessity we find in the eternal nature of God (“de natura Rationis est res sub hac aeternitatis specie contemplari”).<sup>21</sup> The fundamentals of reason are in fact the notions shared by everyone, which allow us to perceive the common elements in things but not to explain the essence of each singular thing, and for this reason “have be conceived whit no relation to time,” but “sub quadam specie aeternitatis.”<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the existence of the singular thing, as understood by reason, is not conceived of as a temporal existence in duration, or rather as a defined quantity of time (“tanquam quaedam quantitatis species”),<sup>23</sup> but rather follows from the eternal necessity of divine nature and, as all singular things, belongs to God. The human mind, to the extent that it can perceive the infinite essence of God and of the eternity in things,<sup>24</sup> has the awareness, through the third kind of knowledge or “scientia intuitiva,” of being part of God and following nature’s order. The human mind in fact expresses the current existence of its body and its modifications only in the course of the body’s duration (*E V*, pr. 21, dem.). The human mind, however, cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but there remains of it something which is eternal (*E V*, pr. 23), something belonging to the essence of God and that therefore is necessarily eternal (“This something, which appertains to the essence of the mind, will necessarily be eternal” *E V*, pr. 23 dem.). That which remains is the idea, a concept, a narration or a mental story of the nature which expresses the essence of the body “sub specie aeternitatis,” a certain way of thinking which belongs to the essence of the mind and which is necessarily eternal (*E V*, pr. 23 sch.). This *species aeternitatis*, translated by Elwes also as “form of eternity,” “cannot have any relationship with time,” and is completely detached from the existence of bodies, which instead perish and are destroyed with time.

As far as the expression “sub quadam specie aeternitatis,” or “sub specie aeternitatis,” which appears only in the second half of the fifth and last part of the *Ethica*, different solutions have been adopted. Each in its own way reflects different approaches and interpretations of the difficult

<sup>20</sup> *E II*, pr. 44, cor.2.

<sup>21</sup> *E II*, 126, 27–28.

<sup>22</sup> *G*, II, 126, 32–33.

<sup>23</sup> *E II*, pr. 45, sch.

<sup>24</sup> *E II*, pr. 45 sch. e pr. 47 sch.

Spinozian concept of eternity and of the relationship between intellect and eternity.

Giovanni Gentile underlined in his edition of the *Ethica* (reprinted in *Etica*, Florence, Sansoni, 19842) how the expression *sub specie aeternitatis* was not to be translated as “under the aspect of eternity” or “from the perspective of eternity,” maintaining that if such were the case Spinoza would have written *sub ratione aeternitatis*, as he in fact did in *E I*, pr. 33, sch. 2, where he criticizes the opinion of those who argue that God does everything according to that which is good: “Deum omnia sub ratione boni agere.” It is worth noting here the opinion of Baensch, who maintained that *species* had only two meanings in Spinoza: something like *appearance*, or rather, *false appearance* (*E IV*, c. 16, 24; *V*, pr. 10 sch.), or *species* as opposed to “kind,” as in the expressions *tanquam quaedam quantitatis species* (*E II*, pr. 45, sch.); *eiusdem amoris & odii species* (*E III*, pr. 30 sch.); *animi fluctuationis tot species dantur, quot sunt species objectorum* (*E III*, pr. 56); *eiusdem speciei aut generis* (*E IV*, Praef.); *species delirii* (*E IV*, cap. 19). This is the meaning that the term *species* assumes in the phrases *sub specie aeternitatis*, as opposed to *sub duratione*, as it is in *E V*, pr. 23 sch. and in the passage cited from the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* (“Res non tam sub duratione, quam sub quadam specie aeternitatis percipit,” *G II*, 39). Baensch underlines how it is impossible to conceive a particular form of duration, because duration cannot have different forms: in eternity, instead, reason can conceive things under a form of eternity that cannot be confused with the absolute eternity of God. Eternity, conceived as a necessity or a unity of eternity in the essence, belongs in fact only to God. In this way, things are necessary not because of their essence, but because they derive their necessary existence, or eternity, from necessity of the nature of God. Giorgio Radetti adds to this important Gentilian note several useful clarifications, warning that Baensch’s position was promptly criticized by Carl Gebhardt, who traced back the origin of the Spinozian expression, in the sense intended by the philosopher, to the Spanish translation of Leone Ebreo’s *Dialoghi d’amore* (“debaxo de especie de bueno”). The use, then, of “species” in the sense of a particular “kind” seems improbable not only if attributed to duration, but also in the case of eternity, which cannot be considered a kind able, in turn, to involve different types. On the other hand, the places in which *species* seems to be able to be translated as *appearance* or *false appearance* can be better expressed, according to Gebhardt, with the translation “aspect” or “form” (*Gestalt* or *Form*). The interpretation of *species* as “appearance” was also

refuted by Harold F. Hallet,<sup>25</sup> who in his study of the concept of *aeternitas* in Spinoza's work, relates the expression *sub specie aeternitatis* to the nature of the *res aeternae* and the *quadam* to a certain approximation of the second kind of knowledge to the *scientia intuitiva*. Even Roger Callois in his French translation of the *Ethica* rejects the value of "appearance" (of eternity) or "aspect" and prefers to keep the term "species".<sup>26</sup>

I would also mention a few examples. G  nevi   Rodis-Lewis proposes on the contrary the translation "sous la forme de l'  ternit  ," intending the term *species* to be equivalent to *eidos* "expression intelligible de l'  tre, vue par l'esprit."<sup>27</sup> In his English version, moreover, Edwin Curley uses mostly the translation "species", where other editors resort to the formula "under the form of eternity."<sup>28</sup> As for the Italian translation, Emilia Giancotti uses "sotto una [certa] specie di eternit  "<sup>29</sup> ("under a [certain] kind of eternity"), following the suggestion of Giovanni Gentile as recalled by Giovanni Radetti,<sup>30</sup> while Filippo Mignini prefers the expression "sotto l'aspetto dell'eternit  " ("under the aspect of eternity").

In the *Ethica* Spinoza refers to eternity and infinity as expressions of eternal attributes, the contemplation of which contends with the second and third kinds of knowledge. But the work's final propositions add to the vocabulary thus far adopted several references to terms of sensation and of experience, which would seem to refer back to the first kind of knowledge: "Sentimus, experimusque nos aeternos esse" (*E V*, pr. 23, sch.). Here the verb *sentire* indicates the knowledge which the mind realizes of a its own modification, or rather is aware of being affected by something else and *sentire* is thus an idea. In this case, the idea by which the mind is affected is an act of the intellect and the *sentire* is not an object of the imagination, but of the mind which feels itself to be eternal as its essence

<sup>25</sup> Harold Forster Hallet, *Aeternitas: A Spinozistic Study* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930) 99–104.

<sup>26</sup> Spinoza, *Ethique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), note 89: "La traduction de *species* par aspect (ou m  me forme) me parait erron  e, car elle sugg  re qu'il y a seulement une apparence d'  ternit  . Je crois pr  f  rable de garder le mot: esp  ce, bien que le mot fran  ais ne conserve pas l'ambigu  t   du latin, qui signifie    la fois esp  ce et apparence (= apparition), sorte et forme. Ici, par l'addition de *quadam*, on consid  re la chose comme rapport  e    Dieu et ind  pendante du temps, donc comme n  cessaire, mais pour ainsi dire par la n  cessit   de Dieu et non directement."

<sup>27</sup> G  nevi   Rodis-Lewis, "Questions sur la cinqui  me partie de l'*Ethique*," *Revue philosophique* 212 (1986–2), n. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Collected Works Of Spinoza*, Volume I, ed. by Edwin M. Curley (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> Cf., *E V*, pr. 23 sch.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Ethica* (Bari: Laterza, 1915), 132 a *E II*, pr. 44, cor. 2.

implies (*involvit*) the essence of the body “sub aeternitatis specie,” and all the more suitably the more it knows things, and in this way knows God. In the last part of the *Ethica*, the relationship between mind and intellect presides over the definition of eternity. Knowing a body, *intelligere* a body, means in fact conceiving of its existence as the essence *sub specie aeternitatis*. We can therefore conceive of things, as Spinoza stated in other places as well, in two ways: in relation to a certain time and space, or as they are contained in God and consequently of the necessity of the nature of God, or rather as real and actual things, and in such a way that ideas imply (*involvere*) the eternal and infinite essence in God.<sup>31</sup> True knowledge of the self and of one’s own body necessarily implies for the mind the knowledge of God, just as it knows itself *sub specie aeternitatis*. This eternity is in fact the essence of God that necessarily implies existence.<sup>32</sup> To know with the third kind of knowledge means therefore knowing nature’s order and the necessity of this order, and in this sense knowing eternity.

We *sentimus* (feel) and *experimus* (know) that we are eternal, but together “certi sumus, mentem aeternam esse,” such that the mind conceives of *sub specie aeternitatis* and this way renders itself aware of itself and of God. To be eternal means drawing on this awareness and by this, being aware (*consciis*) composes our bliss and perfection, from which is born the *amor Dei intellectualis* which is precisely of the third kind of knowledge. As death coincides with oblivion, for ourselves and for the world, that which remains (*remanet, illesa manet*)<sup>33</sup> is the part of the mind which is “conscious of itself, or of God, or of things.”<sup>34</sup> this eternal part of the mind is the intellect, while the part that perishes is the imagination (pr. 40 cor.). Eternity for Spinoza is therefore defined as eternity of the mind, as this way of thinking together with all other eternal ways of thinking compose the eternal and infinite intellect of God.<sup>35</sup> Eternity is therefore both intuition and awareness of oneself, God and all those things which necessarily accompany the *aeterna quadam necessitas* which never ceases to be (*nunquam esse desinit*).<sup>36</sup>

In the fifth and final part of *Ethics*, dedicated to the knowledge of the third kind, or rather the power of the intellect, the Mind, particularly

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<sup>31</sup> E V, pr. 29 sch.

<sup>32</sup> E V, pr. 30, dem.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. E V, pr. 38, dem.

<sup>34</sup> “... sui, & Dei, & rerum ... conscia” (E V, pr. 39, sch.).

<sup>35</sup> E V, pr. 40 sch.

<sup>36</sup> E V, pr. 42 sch.



*intelligit*, that is *concipit* no longer “sub quadam specie aeternitatis,” but “sub specie aeternitatis.”<sup>37</sup> This capacity to conceive of eternity, which the human mind implies, Spinoza called “intellectual love of God,” and this God is presented as infinity and eternity. To feel eternity is to feel that we are part of a nature which is all the *omnia*, the *omnitudo* which is God. But this “experience” belongs neither to the first or second kinds of knowledge, but which is for Spinoza, we could say, a consistent account, a narration founded on relationships of cause and effect and common notions.<sup>38</sup>

The philosophical terminology used here also draws on theological vocabulary, but Spinoza transfers it to the sphere of the intellect and of eternity. With the third kind of knowledge, eternity is thought of not as an autonomous and absolute entity, but as something in which it is impossible to no longer exist, and therefore as something always tied to the existence of the being: eternity is in this sense the expression of an atemporal presence of the being, completely removed from past or future, in which the mind is active and not passive. Time resides in the imagination, but even eternity, if construed as a universal notion and as an element subtracted from existence itself and from the presence of God it cannot rationally be tapped into (eternity, in fact, is not demonstrable). That which most interests Spinoza, instead, is man considered in his possibility to emancipate himself from the law in order to tap into a dimension which coincides with the *natura naturans*, a dimension which passes from a statute of awe to the cult of the intellect and the service of God. The emendation of the mind must therefore consist in finding a meaning, in managing to construct a history of life that might give meaning to one's experiences. In other words: we live but once, but there are many ways to live and our objective is to know and conduct as aware a life as possible. It is in this full awareness that resides the meaning of the *scientia intuitiva* and the fundamental of Spinoza's concept of eternity.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *E V*, pr. 22; *E V*, pr. 23, sch.; pr. 29 e dem.; pr. 30 e dem.; pr. 31 dem.; pr. 36.

<sup>38</sup> For the first kind of knowledge cf. *E II*, pr. 40, sch. 2; pr. 25. For the second kind of knowledge cf. pr. 37–40. For the third kind of knowledge cf. pr. 40, sch. 2.

<sup>39</sup> This concept is expressed also in *KV II*, *Appendix*.



PART FOUR

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY *TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM*



FROM ROUSSEAU TO KANT:  
A CASE OF *TRANSLATIO IUDICII*<sup>1</sup>

Hansmichael Hohenegger

To give a comprehensive and systematic overview of the influence of Rousseau's thought on the development of Kant's philosophy would be a worthy but rather demanding enterprise. The themes involved in a reconstruction of this very important intellectual filiation would include multifarious themes from different domains: ethics, pedagogy, anthropology, politics, philosophy of history, theory of knowledge, and even music; the study of all of which would require specialist knowledge in each of these disciplines. Such an endeavor would be highly desirable, for example starting from the fundamental book of Ferrari, *Les sources françaises de la philosophie de Kant*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1979. The chapter dedicated to Rousseau—consisting for the most part of parallel quotations from Rousseau and from Kant—could be the springboard for a great deal of further research, but even as a starting point it counts more than sixty pages.

In this short paper, I cannot possibly cover even one of the above-named themes in its entirety. I will offer you instead a methodological approach: I will analyze not *where* Rousseau is a source for Kant, but *how* he is a source for him, and specifically what kind of source.

In tribute to the general theme of this conference, I propose to consider this filiation as a case of *translatio iudicii*, or rather a *mutatio iudicis*. In Roman law these terms refer to the moving of a trial from one court of law or one judge to another. With this metaphor I wish to point out that the relationship between two philosophical systems is not a linear transition of concepts and terminology but a complex transaction that requires a critical revision of both systems.

What transformation takes place when the Rousseauian problem becomes a Kantian one? The juridical metaphor hints at the fact that determining what a philosophical system owes to another is not a simple

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Kant's writings are given by the original pagination (A = first edition; B = second edition) from Immanuel Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden* (Wiesbaden-Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1968). Transcriptions of lectures or handwritten remains are cited from *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1900) (hereafter KGS); followed in each case by the page number of the translation consulted if possible.

description of the transition of an argument from one system to a new one: in philosophical matters the replacement of one judge with another may involve not only the necessity to support a judicial case with new legal arguments and factual evidence, but also the acquaintance with a completely new *iurisdictio*.

First of all, we should be able to characterize the way a philosopher like Kant reads other philosophers. How does Kant read Rousseau and what is he looking for?<sup>2</sup> What are the differences between Kant's way of reading Rousseau and his way of reading authors like Wolff and Baumgarten? According to Kant what matters in reading is to grasp the idea of the book, but this idea belongs more to the reader than to the author (the famous Kantian *Besserverstehen*).<sup>3</sup> What in a book is *not* idea, but *Terminologien und Formeln* (terminology and formulas)<sup>4</sup>—i.e. what belongs only to the “form of a system,” or the technical part of it<sup>5</sup>—can be collected from other systems and used as building materials (*Bauzeug*). Indeed, from the point of view of a critical system, all preceding systems are but “ruins of collapsed older edifices (*Ruinen eingefallener alter Gebäude*).”<sup>6</sup> But, of course, this does not mean that Kant reads books only to collect *Bauzeug* ready for use; he, like everyone else, is also looking for new insights. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant answers the question of what kinds of books are preferable for the latter purpose:

<sup>2</sup> That he read and reread Rousseau is beyond question. One citation, probably the most famous, will be eloquent enough: “I must read Rousseau so long that the beauty of his expressions no longer disturbs me, and only then can I first investigate him with reason [Ich muß den Rousseau so lange lesen bis mich die Schönheit der Ausdrücke gar nicht mehr stört u. dann kann ich allererst ihn mit Vernunft untersuchen].” Immanuel Kant, *Notes on Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, in id., *Notes and Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5, KGS XX, 30.

<sup>3</sup> On Kant's way of reading, see Norbert Hinske, *Kant über Lesen und Bücher*, in *Insel-Almanach auf das Jahr 1964* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1963), 132–40. On *Besserverstehen*, see *ibid.*, 133. See also *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781–87) (hereafter KrV) B 370/A 314; B 862–63/A 835; *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 395; 692.

<sup>4</sup> “Sich nicht an Terminologien fesseln und an Formeln.” KGS XVI, 819, Refl. 3411. (1776–89).

<sup>5</sup> KGS XXIV, 508, *Logik Pölitz*, “Der technische Theil der Logik könnte seyn, die Logik in so ferne sie die Form eines Systems enthält.” The technical part of logic contains *only*—I would like to add—the form of a system. As form of the understanding, logic is the theory, or science, of the use of understanding. These distinctions and observation pertain to the Kantian *corpus logicum*, nevertheless, as logic is the profound structure of transcendental philosophy as a whole, they can be regarded as general considerations on Kant's philosophical system.

<sup>6</sup> KrV B 863/A 835; trans., 693. From the transcendental point of view the whole of the preceding philosophical systems are “edifices, to be sure, but only in ruins [zwar Gebäude, aber nur in Ruinen].” KrV, B 880/A 852; trans., 702.

When I hear that an uncommon mind has demonstrated away the freedom of the human will, the hope of a future life, and the existence of God, I am eager to read the book, for I expect that his talent will advance my insights.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Kant adds, “the dogmatic defender of the good cause against this enemy I would not read at all.”<sup>8</sup> Kant explains this surprising position as follows: “an everyday illusion [as it is created by the dogmatic philosopher] does not give as much material for new observations as an alien one that is sensibly thought out [*ein befremdlicher und sinnreich ausgedachter*].”<sup>9</sup> Here Kant is clearly stating that one may draw new insight only from paradoxical and skeptical writings, whereas in dogmatic writings we may only find confirmation of our conventional point of view.

The citations above are from the *Discipline of Pure Reason in Respect of its Polemical Employment*, but they are more generally relevant for the architectonic of the critical system. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant characterizes “logical egoism” as a mental disease, a kind of private sense as opposed to common sense.<sup>10</sup> He adds that “it is a hazardous enterprise to state publicly something that contradicts the general opinion, accepted even by intelligent people. This semblance of egoism is called paradox.”<sup>11</sup> However, Kant does not condemn logical egoism unless it is motivated by vanity. Banality that conforms to the mainstream opinion is even more dangerous than paradox because it “lulls one to sleep,” while paradox “arouses [*erweckt*] the mind to attention and investigation, which often leads to discoveries.”<sup>12</sup> If we hold in mind Kant’s well-known

<sup>7</sup> KrV B 781/A 753; trans., 650.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> KrV B 781/A 753; trans., 650. See also *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798) (hereafter *Anthr.*), § 5, B 20: “But in general a certain degree of mystery is not unwelcome to a reader, because by means of it his own acumen to resolve the obscure into clear concepts becomes palpable.” *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26. On a general role of paradox see KGS XV, 69; Paradox as “Übung der Vernunft.” KGS XV, pp. 119, 413, 549, 576, 672, 889; XVIII, pp. 13, 408.

<sup>10</sup> See *Anthr.* § 2, B 7, trans., 17. Elsewhere Kant describes skepticism as a folly, *Thorheit*, “because the skeptic transforms all *pro verum habere* (holding to be true) in appearance, which is for him the contrary of truth, therefore he has to admit criteria of distinction between kinds of *pro verum habere*, nonetheless he denies them completely [denn er verwandelt alles Fürwahrhalten in Schein, den er der Wahrheit entgegengesetzt, muß also doch Kriterien des Unterschiedes derselben einräumen, und gleichwohl läugnet er diese gänzlich ab].” KGS XVIII, 294; *Refl.* 5645 (1780–88).

<sup>11</sup> *Anthr.* § 2, B 7. “Eben darum ist es ein *Wagestück*: eine der allgemeinen Meinung, selbst der Verständigen, widerstreitende Behauptung ins Publicum zu spielen. Dieser Anschein des Egoisms heißt die Paradoxie.” Trans. (modified), 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Anthr.* B 7; trans., 18.

*Schlafmetaphorik* it is even easier to see the correlation between skepticism and the paradoxical nonconformist way of thinking on one side and dogmatism and the conformist way on the other. As we know, the point of departure of critical philosophy was Hume's warning: "I confess frankly, the admonition of David Hume was the very thing, which many years ago, first interrupted my dogmatic slumber, and gave quite a new direction to my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy."<sup>13</sup>

That Kant was awakened from the dogmatic slumber by a skeptic is obvious from an architectonic point of view. When examining the three maxims of common human understanding as they are exposed in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*—"1. To think for oneself; 2. To think in the position of everyone else; 3. Always to think in accord with oneself."<sup>14</sup>—we are able to understand the role of paradox in philosophical thought.

In order to think consistently (in a systematic way) the philosopher must have the courage to risk paradox and *at the same time* confront his point of view with the standpoint of everyone else, which is not only a measure of mental sanity but also a logical rule for what Kant calls "an external criterion of truth."<sup>15</sup> Even if there seems to be a symmetry between the two first maxims, the first is more important for the building of a system because without the capacity for *Selbstdenken* (thinking for oneself) there cannot be a new system at all; the second is essentially a pluralistic requirement to check the soundness of the system.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> I. Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (1783), A 13, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10. "Ich gestehe frei: die Erinnerung des David Hume war eben dasjenige, was mir vor vielen Jahren zuerst den dogmatischen Schlummer unterbrach und meinen Untersuchungen im Felde der spekulativen Philosophie eine ganz andere Richtung gab."

<sup>14</sup> *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), § 40, B 159–60, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 174.

<sup>15</sup> *Anthr.* B 6; trans., 18: "criterium veritatis externum."

<sup>16</sup> It would be wrong to confuse skepticism as a function in Kantian architectonic and as an example of paradox and logical egoism with what skeptics, especially Hume, actually said. In fact, *allgemeine Menschenvernunft* and political pluralism are linked in Kant with the theory of the impossibility of radical error and, in this case, Hume could be a source for Kant. In the essay *Of the Coalition of Parties* Hume writes that in order to avoid political confrontation degenerating into civil war: "There is not a more effectual method of promoting so good an end, than to prevent all unreasonable insult and triumph of the one party over the other, to encourage moderate opinions, to find the proper medium in all disputes, to persuade each that its antagonist may possibly be sometimes in the right, and to keep a balance in the praise and blame, which we bestow on either side." David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (London: Longmans, 1889), vol. I, II, XIV, 464. Aesthetic pluralism, with a strong empiricist flavor, can also be found in Hume's other essay *The Sceptic*: "You will never convince a man, who is not accustomed to Italian music, and has

In addition to Hume—and no less significant for Kant—the other pre-eminent author of paradox and logically risky writing is certainly Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Kant reads both in order to shape the new and the architectonic in his system, i.e. what belongs to the idea, rather than to gather “building materials.” For the latter purpose, the most important sources are the schoolbooks he employed as a teacher for more than forty years in the classroom, which are all on the dogmatic and rationalistic side.

Of course, there is not always a clear-cut distinction between these two different kinds of readings: what is *idea* and what is *Bauzeug* cannot be decided in advance, not even by Kant himself. In order to evaluate the influence of a certain text in Kant’s thought we must determine if the source is only a *Bauzeug* or if there is a true interlocation between philosophers, an answer to an implicit question, the philosophical recognition of a discovery, or the germ of a new philosophical system. In the *Announcement of the Lectures for the Year 1765–66*, Kant affirms:

I shall set forth the method by which we must study man not only in the varying forms in which his accidental circumstances have molded him, in the distorted form in which even philosophers have almost always misconstrued him, but what is enduring in human nature, and the proper place of man in creation.

Kant salutes this method of inquiry as “a great discovery of our age, if we consider it in its overall context, totally unknown to the ancients.”<sup>17</sup> The fact that Kant does not quote Rousseau explicitly, while he is evidently thinking of him,<sup>18</sup> is not a lack of generosity on his side, but a mark of the importance of the idea, which manifests itself even more in its anonymity. He is discovering Rousseau’s own discovery, but he also shows historical subtlety, when he writes that this discovery was “totally unknown to the

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not an ear to follow its intricacies, that a Scotch tune is not preferable. You have not even any single argument, beyond your own taste, which you can employ in your behalf: And to your antagonist, his particular taste will always appear a more convincing argument to the contrary. If you be wise, each of you will allow, that the other may be in the right; and having many other instances of this diversity of taste, you will both confess, that beauty and worth are merely of a relative nature, and consist in an agreeable sentiment, produced by an object in a particular mind, according to the peculiar structure and constitution of that mind.” *Essays*, Vol. I, I, XVIII, 217. For the philosophical relevance of the theory of the impossibility of radical error, see Norbert Hinske, *Kant als Herausforderung an die Gegenwart* (Freiburg-München: Alber, 1980), 44–66.

<sup>17</sup> KGS II, 311.

<sup>18</sup> See Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe: Two Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), 21.

ancients," "if we consider it in its overall context [wenn man sie in ihrem völligen Plane erwägt]." Kant probably knows the ancient Roman sources of some Rousseauian thought (Seneca's "Nulli nos vitio natura conciliat; integros ac liberos genuit," *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, XCIV), but he wishes to underline the originality of Rousseau's philosophical use of them. Later, in the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), Kant quotes Rousseau along with Seneca to illustrate the optimistic view according to which the "germ of good" in mankind may produce a moral progress if only we were able to follow nature. "This opinion [that the world is constantly advancing from worse to better] is certainly not founded on experience if what is meant is moral good or evil (not civilization), for the history of all times speaks too powerfully against it. Probably it is merely a good-natured hypothesis . . . designed to encourage us in the unwearied cultivation of the germ of good that perhaps lies in us."<sup>19</sup> In his *Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* Norman Kemp-Smith maintains that here Kant is distinguishing his position from Rousseau's.<sup>20</sup> But Kant is not very far from the Rousseauian idea when he states his own principle of optimism as duty: "we must . . . believe in a practical way in a concurrence of divine wisdom with the course of nature, unless one would rather give up one's final end."<sup>21</sup> In quoting Rousseau and Seneca, Kant seems to be taking position *à sa façon* against Diderot's ungenerous attack on Rousseau in his introduction to the French translation of Seneca's writings. The attack is violent, not only on a personal but also on a scientific level. Diderot declares that "most of his [Rousseau's] highly praised philosophical ideas as well as moral and political principles" are pillaged from the works of Seneca, Plutarch, Montaigne, Locke and Sidney.<sup>22</sup> In no way does Kant share this minimization of the importance of Rousseau's discoveries. Kant does not believe that a discovery is the property of those who arrive at it first.

I am very glad when someone finds in the Ancients the best elements of [my] doctrines. That a judgment of the intellect was already present in the

<sup>19</sup> *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793) BA 5; *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 46.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Kemp Smith, *Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Routledge, 1918), LVIII.

<sup>21</sup> I. Kant, *The End of all Things* (1794) A 516; in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 223.

<sup>22</sup> Denis Diderot, *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron, ou Vie de Sénèque le philosophe* (London: Bouillon, 1782), 263; See also pp. 93–102, footnote 208.



sound conception of someone else is to be expected and serves the purpose of unifying the understanding of the many. But I did understand in Locke the passage about the *iudicii coexistentiae* only afterwards.<sup>23</sup>

One thing is certain: Hume and Rousseau share the same kind of relevance as sources for Kant's architectonic and are also systematically related to each other. One of the themes that associates these two authors is the philosophical reflection on ignorance.

Hume's skepticism about the necessity of causal relation, i.e. the possibility of a priori synthetic judgment, was the first impulse that moved Kant to critically draw the limits of our experience. This is why Kant calls Hume:

One of these geographers of human reason, who took himself to have satisfactorily disposed of these questions by having expelled them outside the horizon of human reason, which however he could not determine.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that Hume was not able to determine this horizon, "since he merely limits our understanding without drawing boundaries for it, and brings about a general distrust but no determinate knowledge of the ignorance that is unavoidable for us,"<sup>25</sup> does not diminish his importance in terms of asking the right question.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Kant also often links Rousseau with the "science of ignorance," although in quite a different way than he does with Hume. The logical theory of error, which is one of the less analyzed aspects of Rousseauian thought, is very important for our interpretation:

Since all our errors come from our judgments, it is clear that if we never needed to judge, we would not need to learn. We would never be in a

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<sup>23</sup> See KGS XVIII, 77; Refl. 5066 (1776–77). "Ich bin sehr wohl damit zufrieden, wenn man das Beste dieser vorgetragenen Lehren bey den Alten antrifft. Daß ein Urtheil des Verstandes schon dem gesunden Begriffe anderer vorgelegen habe, ist zu vermuthen und dient dazu, den Verstand vieler zu vereinigen. Aber ich habe im Locke die stelle der *iudicii coexistentiae* erst nachher verstanden." Kant refers to J[ohn Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, chapter VIII ff.

<sup>24</sup> KrV B 788/A 760; trans., 654.

<sup>25</sup> KrV B 795/A 767; trans., 657.

<sup>26</sup> Skepticism as opposed to the skeptical method is described by Kant as a "künstmäßige und szientifische Unwissenheit." While the skeptical method is a way to investigate the object of controversy "seeking to discover the point of misunderstanding in disputes that are honestly intended and conducted with intelligence by both sides," "skepticism [is] a principle of artful and scientific ignorance that undermines the foundations of all cognition, in order, if possible, to leave no reliability or certainty anywhere." KrV, B 451/A 424; trans., 468.

position to be deceived. . . . Since the more men know, the more they are deceived, the only means of avoiding error is ignorance.<sup>27</sup>

Fundamentally based upon Epicurean logic,<sup>28</sup> this theory is of paramount importance in shaping the notion of judgment in Kant, as it is clearly visible in the transcription of the *Lectures on Logic*.<sup>29</sup> The peculiar relationship between judgment, ignorance, and error has a far-reaching influence in the *iudicia praevia*, which will become the “reflective judgments” of the third *Critique*.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, this theory is relevant for the structure of the antinomy of reason: since reason is antinomic, we cannot

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou l'éducation*, *Œuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (hereafter CÉR) (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959–95), vol. IV, 483: “Puisque toutes nos erreurs viennent de nos jugements, il est clair que si nous n'avions jamais besoin de juger, nous n'aurions nul besoin d'apprendre; nous ne serions jamais dans le cas de nous tromper. . . . Puisque plus les hommes savent, plus ils se trompent, le seul moyen d'éviter l'erreur est l'ignorance.” Trans. in J.J. Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, ed. Allan Bloom (Boston: Basic Books, 1979) 204. Quoted in Birgitta Drosdol and Hiroyuki Numata, “Eine unbemerkte Quelle von Kants Logikvorlesungen,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 8 (1976), 121–32, 123; See also KGS XXIV, 83.

<sup>28</sup> Only if we judge may we incur an error, since sensation is never deceptive. “In *The Canon* Epicurus states that the sensations, the prolepsis, and the passions are the criteria of truth.” Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Philosophers*, X.31. It is noteworthy that Kant uses both terms, *canon* and *prolepsis*, in his logic. Kant considers Epicure an instructive author, who deserves an accurate reading. “The imputation against Epicurus that represents his doctrines as absurd deserves no credit. The useful aim of philosophical history consist in the presentation of good models and the display of instructive mistakes, likewise in the cognition of the natural progress of reason from ignorance (not crude error) to cognition. If someone tells me about the very absurd opinion of someone else whom I have already recognized to be very acute through a good [single] test, I do not believe him. Perhaps his expression was careless or not understood, just as I do not believe gossip about someone in whom I have perceived unimpeachable uprightness. What would it help me to know that? It is hateful to give in to an accuser.” KGS XVIII, 12; Refl. 4860. 1776–78; trans. in *Notes and fragments*, 196. “Die imputationen des Epicurs, welche seine Lehren Ungereimt vorstellen, verdienen keinen Glauben. Die Nützliche Absicht der philosophischen historie besteht in der Vorbildung guter Muster und der Darstellung lehrreicher Vergehungen, imgleichen in der Erkenntnis des natürlichen Fortschritts der Vernunft von der Unwissenheit (nicht dem groben Irrthum) zur Erkenntnis. Wenn mir einer von jemandem, den ich schon durch eine einzige Probe als scharfsinnig erkannt habe, sehr ungereimte Meinungen sagt, so glaube ich ihm nicht. sein Ausdruck ist vielleicht unvorsichtig gewesen oder nicht verstanden worden, so wie ich von dem, an dem ich einen unverdächtigen Schein der Rechtschaffenheit wargenommen habe, die Nachreden nicht glaube. Was hilft mir es zu wissen. Es ist heslich, einen Ankläger abzugeben.”

<sup>29</sup> KGS XXIV, pp. 83, 104. Quoted in Drosdol, Numata, 123.

<sup>30</sup> “*A iudicium praevium* is a judgment that precedes investigation. . . . *A iudicium reflectens* is where one sets a judgment as a problem, in order to investigate its truth. Even for seeking, one must have a particular principle. [*Judicium reflectens* wo man ein Urteil gleich als ein Problem setzt, um die Wahrheit zu untersuchen. Auch zum Suchen muß man ein besondres Prinzip haben].” *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken* KGS XXIV, 737; *Lectures on Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 472. See Mirella Capozzi, *Kant e la logica*

avoid judgment by using ignorance as a hideout. We have an obligation to address the problem because abstaining from judgment would mean reason abdicating itself. This condition—to be obligated, and therefore to be authorized, to find a solution—makes it possible to create a semantic frame of philosophical concepts (categories) that are transcendental criteria of sense and meaning of all possible experience. Otherwise these concepts would be simply transcendent, i.e. hyperphysical, since no intuition corresponds to the concept of causality, which we need as a condition of possibility of the cognition of all connections of phenomena. Only the absolute necessity to address the antinomies of reason allows us to develop a transcendental philosophy.

Here I wish to stress the role of ignorance in shaping the Kantian concept of philosophy. The famous distinction between “a merely scholastic concept of philosophy” and the “*conceptus cosmicus*, which has always formed the real basis of the term philosophy,”<sup>31</sup> relies on the difference between wisdom and science. Philosophy in the latter sense as “teleology of human reason” has its ultimate goal in wisdom, but wisdom seems to be in a paradoxical relationship with science. Toward the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—a *Nervensaft*-consuming book as Moses Mendelssohn called it (April 10, 1783)—Kant writes: “in regard to the essential ends of human nature even the highest philosophy cannot advance further than the guidance that nature has also conferred on the most common understanding.”<sup>32</sup> And in a manuscript note, Kant states a similar notion:

Philosophy (*doctrina sapientiae*) is not an art of what can be done with man, but of what man can do with himself (*sapere aude*). Try to make use of your own reason for your absolute and true end.—In order to do that no science is required (*scientia*). Everyone knows the doctrine of the highest goal (commandment).<sup>33</sup>

This idea is very close to Rousseauian despising of science. Indeed, Rousseau wrote:

O virtue! Sublime science of simple souls, are so many efforts and so much equipment really required to know you? Are not your principles engraved in all hearts, and is it not enough in order to learn your Laws to return into oneself and to listen to the voice of one's conscience in the silence of

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(Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2002), 625. Hansmichael Hohenegger, *Kant, filosofo dell'architettura: Saggio sulla Critica della facoltà di giudizio* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2004), 188; 224.

<sup>31</sup> KrV B 866/A 838; trans., 694.

<sup>32</sup> KrV B 859/A 831; trans., 690.

<sup>33</sup> KGS XXI, 117.

the passions? This is genuine Philosophy. Let us know to know how to be content with that.<sup>34</sup>

It seems hard to accept that this is the idea of ignorance in Kantian philosophy. Yet, a methodological role of ignorance has to be found in Kant. This search for a knowledge of ignorance is a promising task because, as Kant says: "The philosophy of ignorance is very useful, but also difficult because it must reach deep into the sources of knowledge."<sup>35</sup>

In the spatial, or geographic metaphor, Humean "ignorance" depends on the fact that the knowable is, in his representation, like an infinite surface that can never be completely known by finite beings. We will not be able to measure this surface and know its form.<sup>36</sup> According to Kant, if we could make a complete survey of all the a priori synthetic judgments (which can be either legitimate, i.e. categories, or not legitimate, i.e. antinomies) we may be able to describe reason as something like a sphere or like the shape of our Earth. Just as we can know the shape of the whole world by measuring one degree of it so—Kant says—can we describe the *Grenzen* of reason through the universality and objectivity of only one synthetic judgment while remaining within the boundaries of the possible experience—in terms of the geographic metaphor—without leaving the surface of the Earth.

Thus we can say that if Hume is the geographer of reason, Rousseau may be called the historian of reason. Indeed, even if Kant does not cite Rousseau, he is clearly thinking of him in the last chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "The History of Pure Reason," when he speaks of the "naturalist of reason." In the negative meaning, a misologist (a hater of reason as scientific instrument), or a naturalist of reason, is someone who holds as a principle:

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<sup>34</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, at the end of the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, CER vol. III, 30: "O vertu! Science sublime des ames simples, faut-il donc tant de peines et d'appareil pour te connoître? Tes principes ne sont-ils pas gravés dans tous les coeurs, et ne suffit-il pas pour apprendre tes Loix de rentrer en soi-même et d'écouter la voix de sa conscience dans le silence des passions? Voila la véritable Philosophie, sachons nous en contenter." Trans. in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28.

<sup>35</sup> KGS XVIII, 36; *Refl.* 4940 (1778). The philosophy of ignorance also reaches back into the history of philosophy: in the *Charmides* 166e Plato already proposed a "science of the lack of science."

<sup>36</sup> KrV B 790/A 762; trans., 654–55: "Our reason is not like an indeterminably extended plane, the limits of which one can cognize only in general, but must rather be compared with a sphere, the radius of which can be found out from the curvature of an arc on its surface (from the nature of synthetic a priori propositions), from which its content and its boundary can also be ascertained with certainty."

That through common understanding without science (which he calls “healthy reason”) more may be accomplished with regard to the most sublime questions that constitute the task of metaphysics than through speculation.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, just as in skepticism, there is also a positive meaning in misology: good misologists are those who “follow common reason, without boasting of their ignorance as a method which contains the secret of drawing the truth out of the deep well of Democritus.”<sup>38</sup> If we exclude “mere misology, reduced to principles” and take into consideration only the role of this modest appeal to common reason, we may say that good misology is not only innocuous, but acceptable and even essential for philosophy itself, when it can be considered a form of wisdom.

There is a conflict, an antinomy, between naturalism of reason and the scientific method (the latter includes the dogmatic and the skeptic method). This conflict is the engine of the history of reason. The task of the critical method is not just to overcome dogmatism and skepticism but, more importantly, to compose this fundamental conflict. In order to achieve this, criticism must consider philosophy as a science that can only have teleological consistency when it coordinates all the possible knowledge towards the only true aim of science, which is “to bring human reason to full satisfaction in that which has always, but until now vainly, occupied its lust for knowledge.” That these are the concluding words of the *Critique of Pure Reason* should give a certain weight to its interpretation in the whole system.

Even for theoretical philosophy, complete satisfaction can be achieved only when philosophy itself recognizes the insufficiency of knowledge that is only technical (i.e. for an arbitrary end). For the wise misologist, in Kant’s picture, Epicure: “Only philosophy can provide this inner satisfaction. It closes the circle, and then it sees how all cognitions fit together in an edifice, in rule-governed ways, for such ends as are suited to humanity.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> KrV B 883/A 855; trans., 703.

<sup>38</sup> KrV B 883/A 855; trans., 703.

<sup>39</sup> “Philosophie allein kann diese innere Genugthuung verschaffen. Sie schließt den Zirkel, und denn siehet sie, wie alle Kenntniße in einem Bau regelmäßig zu solchen Zwecken zusammen hängen, die der Menschheit angemessen sind.” *Wiener Logik*, KGS XXIV, 800; trans. in *Lectures on Logic*, 260–61. In the so-called *Jäsche Logik* (1800), the same idea: “He who hates science but loves wisdom all the more is called a misologist. Misology arises commonly out of an emptiness of scientific cognitions and a certain vanity bound up with that. Sometimes, however, people who had initially pursued sciences with great industry and fortune, but who found in the end no satisfaction [*Befriedigung*] in the whole of their knowledge, also fall into the mistake of misology. Philosophy is the only science

The reference to non-arbitrary ends (which suits humanity) is very similar to the notion that the task of the philosopher is that of restoring to mankind its own rights. Indeed, if Hume gives the most important architectonic impulse to Kant's critical system when considered as a *Wissenschaft*, Rousseau can be seen as the one who gave him the impulse to consider philosophy itself as an enterprise that can be architectonic because all the knowledge in it must be related to the ultimate end of restoring to all men "the rights of humanity." When we read the famous above-cited passage on the awakening from dogmatic slumber (Hume) along with the almost as famous passage in which Kant acknowledges his debt to Rousseau—not only as a man, but also as a philosopher—we appreciate how profound the influence of these two philosophers was on Kant's thought:

I am myself by inclination an investigator. I feel a complete thirst for knowledge and an eager unrest to go further in it as well as satisfaction at every acquisition. There was a time when I believed that this alone could constitute the honor of mankind, and I had contempt for the rabble who know nothing. *Rousseau* brought me around. This blinding superiority disappeared, I learned to honor human beings, and I would find myself far more useless than the common laborer if I did not believe that this consideration could impart to all others a value in establishing the rights of humanity.<sup>40</sup>

This antinomy between "lust for knowledge" and ignorance is not only a crucial turning point in Kant's life, but also the foundational germ of his concept of philosophy. Thus, for Kant the only path left open to philosophy is criticism, which can resolve the conflict between the naturalistic and the scientific method. The history of reason is then the overcoming of this conflict and, as such, is the process of reason becoming an adult, i.e. wisdom.<sup>41</sup> Philosophy as a science will attain its goal only if it confronts

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that knows how to provide for us this inner satisfaction [*innere Genugthuung*], for it closes, as it were, the scientific circle, and only through it do the sciences attain order and connection." *Logic* (1800), A 28; trans. in *Lectures on Logic*, 539. "Der die Wissenschaft haßt, um desto mehr aber die Weisheit liebt, den nennt man einen Misologen. Die Misologie entspringt gemeinlich aus einer Leerheit von wissenschaftlichen Kenntnissen und einer gewissen damit verbundenen Art von Eitelkeit. Zuweilen verfallen aber auch diejenigen in den Fehler der Misologie, welche anfangs mit großem Fleiße und Glücke den Wissenschaften nachgegangen waren, am Ende aber in ihrem ganzen Wissen keine Befriedigung fanden. Philosophie ist die einzige Wissenschaft, die uns diese innere Genugthuung zu verschaffen weiß, denn sie schließt gleichsam den wissenschaftlichen Zirkel und durch sie erhalten sodann erst die Wissenschaften Ordnung und Zusammenhang."

<sup>40</sup> *Bemerkungen*, trans. 7; KGS XX, 44.

<sup>41</sup> "Quid est autem, non dicam in homine, sed etiam in omni caelo atque terra ratione divinius? Quae quom adolevit atque perfecta est, nominatur rite sapientia." "But what is more divine, I will not say in man only, but in all heaven and earth, than reason? And

itself with the commonest of reasons, until reason—both scientific and common—becomes “universal human reason,” which is a republic where the original right of human reason is restored and “in which everyone has a voice.”<sup>42</sup>

What I wish to underline with the juridical metaphor of the *translatio iudicii* is the peculiarity of the intellectual Rousseau-Kant filiation. Such filiation is not a translation of Rousseau’s ingenuous language of enthusiasm and *sentiments* into Kant’s *Begriffe*, *Urteile* and *Vernunftschlüsse*, and it is not thus that Rousseau’s philosophy acquired its true philosophical value. In his wonderful essay, “*Kant and Rousseau*,” even Ernst Cassirer seems to hold this idea:

Rousseau never learned to speak the language of “clear and distinct ideas.” But Kant’s thought was bound up with this language. He demanded definiteness and accuracy in ideas and clarity and perspicuity in their architectonic construction. He had to think Rousseau’s ideas further, and he had to complete them and give them a systematic foundation. And in so doing it developed that this foundation led to a problem of absolutely universal significance, to a problem that included a “genuine revolution in men’s way of thinking.”<sup>43</sup>

There is some undeniable truth in this view, just as there are undeniable differences in the characters of the two men. One begins his literary career (after the success of his first *Discourse*) selling his watch and exclaiming “Thank Heaven! I shall no longer want to know the hour!”<sup>44</sup> The other, the Prussian, is “the man of the clock” (*der Mann nach der Uhr*). The first was “early filled with an unquenchable desire to wander and . . . declared that the happiest hours he had enjoyed had been those of his aimless tramping about,”<sup>45</sup> while the other, the *regiomontanus*, never went out of the *Provinz* of Königsberg.<sup>46</sup> Only once did Kant give up his daily walk and his

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reason, when it is full grown and perfected [*cum adolevit atque perfecta est*], is rightly called wisdom.” Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De legibus*, I, 7 (Harvard: Loeb Classical Library, 1959), 320.

<sup>42</sup> KrV B 780/A 752; trans., 650.

<sup>43</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe: Two Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), 21, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions* VIII, 363: “I began the change in my dress; I quitted laced clothes and white stockings; I put on a round wig, laid aside my sword, and sold my watch; saying to myself, with inexpressible pleasure: “Thank Heaven! I shall no longer want to know the hour!”

<sup>45</sup> Cassirer, *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe*, 56.

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed descriptions of his trips outside Königsberg, See Werner Stark on [http://web.uni-marburg.de/kant/webseite/bio\\_reis.htm](http://web.uni-marburg.de/kant/webseite/bio_reis.htm).



role as a human clock, but it was because he was reading *Emile* (1767), and this fact had consequences almost as relevant as those of Rousseau selling his watch and celebrating his independence. Still, the two philosophers share similarities in their *Wanderlust*, except that Kant develops his exclusively in the realm of the intellect. Kant writes in a manuscript note:

The critique of pure reason is a prophylactic against a sickness of reason that has its germ in our nature. It is the opposite of the inclination that chains us to our fatherland (homesickness): a longing to leave our circle and to relate to other worlds.<sup>47</sup>

In any case, the biographical approach can guide the interpreter only if it leads to new *aperçus* into the texts, but in this case such explorations are of little value because what matters in this *translatio iudiciis* is how Kant rethought Rousseau's paradoxes. The *tribunal of reason* is something ideal because we need to judge all possible uses of our reason holding "universal human reason" as a model. Yet it is also a contingent historical process because reason itself is the development of a republican constitution of all human minds. Thus, according to Kant, between Rousseau and himself there cannot be a true distinction between *mine* and *yours* (a deduction of respective intellectual property), but the recognition of the different way of drawing from the common well of reason on behalf of mankind attaining *Mündigkeit*.

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<sup>47</sup> "Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft ist ein Präservativ vor eine Krankheit der Vernunft, welche ihren Keim in unserer Natur hat. Sie ist das Gegentheil von der Neigung, die uns an unser Vaterland fesselt (heimweh). Eine sehnsucht, uns ausser unserm Kreise zu verlieren und Andre Welten zu beziehen." KGS XVIII, 79–80; Refl. 5073 (1777) Immanuel Kant, *Notes and fragments*, 209–10.



## HEGEL'S TRANSLATION OF PLATONIC "ANALOGY"

Valerio Rocco Lozano

Two important deviations from Platonic thought can be found in Hegel's *Lectures*. The first of them corresponds to the absence of subjective freedom in the *Republic*; the second entails *Timaeus*, a dialogue that, according to Hegel's appreciation, allows an integral explanation of Plato's philosophy of nature. In order to account for Plato's doctrine of a mathematical analogy that steers the creation of the world, Hegel includes his own theory of syllogism,<sup>1</sup> and thereby incurs an obviously unacceptable claim: the notion of syllogism has indeed only existed since Aristotle. Hegel's awareness of this historical fact was probably outweighed here by his intention to identify Plato as his predecessor, to *appropriate* his philosophy<sup>2</sup>—a strategy that requires a certain amount of reinterpretation.

The starting point for the *Lectures* deviation is a fundamental passage in Plato's dialogue. At the very beginning of *Timaeus*'s speech there is an overall view on the material generation of the world by the Maker, and the elements are mentioned:

Because the world was to become corporeal, visible and tangible, and since without fire nothing can be seen, and without solidity, without earth, nothing can be touched, God in the beginning made fire and earth. But two things cannot be united without a third, there must be a bond between them, uniting both. The fairest bond, however, is that which most

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, introduction to *Vorlesungen über Plato-Leçons sur Platon*, by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1976), 43: "Hegel introduit par la force la théorie du syllogisme comme conception de Dieu, théorie qu'il expose tout au long dans la troisième partie de sa Logique, afin d'expliquer la théorie des proportions nécessaires à la constitution du monde. Hegel assimile, sans autre précision, l'analogie mathématique et le syllogisme."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Werner Beierwaltes, postface to the French translation of *Platonisme et idéalisme* (Paris: Vrin, 2000), 214: "La conscience d'une *différence* herméneutique par rapport au passé, et en même temps la tentative intérieurement efficiente de celui qui comprend pour mettre en relation le passé, l'autre, ce que lui apparaît comme étranger, avec des questions ultérieures et actuelles, voilà ce qui rend tout d'abord possible cette *appropriation* critique et en même temps productive. . . . Fondée sur de tels motifs, cette manière de se tourner vers l'histoire de la pensée s'accroît encore à mon sens l'évidence interne d'une interprétation et sa force de conviction pour les autres. C'est ainsi que pour moi *l'histoire des concepts* n'a jamais été le simple ornement, érudit, d'une intention systématique de philosopher."

completely fuses itself and that which is bound by it. Proportion is best adapted to effect such a fusion.<sup>3</sup>

Some light must be shed on the term, “proportion:” in the Greek text “*analogía*,” also translatable as “analogy” and predicated of three or four numbers that are held together by a special ratio. Plato refers to a purely mathematical relationship between fire and earth, probably because these are the elements that enable sight and touch (eminent senses in Platonic epistemology). The mathematical perspective is only confirmed by the continuing statements:

Whenever of three numbers or magnitudes or powers, that which is the mean is to the last term what the first term is to the mean, and again when the mean is to the first term as the last term is to the mean; then the mean having become the first and last, and the first and last both having become means, all things will necessarily come to be the same; but having come to be the same, everything will be one.<sup>4</sup>

In order to grasp the exact meaning of this difficult passage, the theory of *exponential numbers* has to be recalled. Although most commentators understood “proportion” as the geometrical progression, recent suggestions had pointed either to irrational numbers, plane geometry, or even pure arithmetic.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, Luc Brisson, who simplified the answers to why elements and regular polygons are associated with the dichotomy of the Pythagorean influence as opposed to the *Theaetetus* influence, explored a heuristic metaphor.<sup>6</sup> This feature would convey a sense of exactitude in order to hide the ignorance of the *real proportions* between regular solids. Brisson’s answer injects a philosophical sense into the solution to a mathematical problem—as was to be expected of such a complex and overcommented topic.

Together with Empedocles, Plato begins with fire and air. The difficult comprehension of this passage did not prevent Hegel from detecting Plato’s scope: to present water and earth as an absolute necessity. Given the world’s three-dimensionality, two middle terms are indeed required. Since the two latter are situated between the two former to settle an analogy,

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 31 b–c.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 32 a.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Luc Brisson, *Le même et l’autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon* (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1998), 359.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Brisson 1998, 382.

mutual transformation is guaranteed. In order to reach this point they simply have to be linked to a polyhedron.<sup>7</sup>

Curiously enough, Schelling also made philosophical remarks on this passage in his early comments to *Timaeus* (1794), but he only stressed God's harmonic generation of the world as observing unity, perfection and order<sup>8</sup>—an aesthetical concept probably derived from Hölderlin. And so to Schelling, once a friend of Hegel and later his rival, proportion remains a purely mathematical concept confined to the exact sciences.

This also touches on how Hegel, instead of furnishing context for the excerpt, provides a metaphysical gloss immediately after having paraphrased the Platonic lines on the necessary creation of air and water:

This is the conclusion which we know from logic; it appears in the form of the ordinary syllogism, in which, however, the whole rationality of the Idea is, at least externally, contained. The distinctions are the extremes, and the mean is the identity which in a supreme degree makes them one.<sup>9</sup>

Though often named "Schluß," syllogism is not to be mistaken with a conclusion,<sup>10</sup> neither is it secluded from the real world. Far from this, it represents Hegel's fundamental method to abolish the segregation of reality and thought—a gradual, progressive process by which reason gains knowledge of itself.<sup>11</sup> Thrice formulated in *Enzyklopädie* sections 206–10,<sup>12</sup> it differs from common syllogisms insofar as its terms are never static; they transform constantly into each other through a permanent fluctuation of mediation.<sup>13</sup> Bear in mind that the conversion of extremes into

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 56 b–c.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *Timaeus 1794* (Tübingen: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994), 41: "Nun beschreibt er ferner die verschiedne Proportionen, nach denen Gott die Welt baute, eine für uns nimmer verständliche Harmonia." Before this (*ibid.*, 40) he presented three reasons why two middle terms are needed: "weil die Welt das vollkommenste, alles umfaßende zoon, weil es nur Eine geben (und also nichts zurückgelaßen werden sollte, woraus eine neue entstehe), damit die Ordnung der Welt nicht durch außerhalb ihres Umfangs liegende Kräfte gestört oder zerstört werden."

<sup>9</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Leçons sur Platon-Vorlesungen über Plato* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1976), 112.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Félix Duque, *Historia de la filosofía moderna. La era de la crítica* (Madrid: Akal, 1998), 710.

<sup>11</sup> For a brief and schematic explanation of the general function of the speculative syllogism in the mature Hegelian system, see Duque 1998, 711–12, note 1689.

<sup>12</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse, Gesammelte Werke*, Band 20 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), 212–13.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Vincenzo Vitiello, *La critica hegeliana a Fichte e la dottrina del sillogismo*, in *Hegel e il nichilismo*, ed. Francesca Micheli and Roberto Morani (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003), 130: "Hegel modifica radicalmente la logica del sillogismo, trasformando il tradizionale

middle terms and vice versa is only a common trait of Plato and Hegel if we ignore the fact that Plato's conception is mathematical, while Hegel's is logical. Still, Hegel's dynamic characterization of syllogism remains vital to understanding why he defined his entire system as the "syllogism of syllogisms." "Everything is syllogism," one of the most renowned sentences of *Enzyklopädie*, could work as a definition of the Absolute.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in his *Lectures on Plato*, Hegel offers an explanation which seemingly backs this interpretation:

In a rational syllogism, however, the main point of its speculative content is the identity of the extremes which are joined to one another; in this it is involved that the subject presented in the mean is a content which does not join itself with another, but only through the other and in the other with itself. In other words, this constitutes the essential nature of God.<sup>15</sup>

Even though Plato ignored Aristotelian philosophy as much as Trinitarian speculations, Hegelian syllogism as godly nature was prefigured in a Platonic text: the subject God generates his son, the world, and "realisiert [sich] in dieser Realität,"<sup>16</sup> and then (a logical, not historical "then") retreats to itself augmented after having embraced Alterity as Holy Spirit ("so ist er erst Geist").<sup>17</sup> A modest Hegel could not refrain from stating that his system exists *in nuce* in Plato's texts: "In the Platonic philosophy we thus have what is best and highest."<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, two aspects must be distinguished in Hegel's strategy. On the one hand, we find his will to embed the rational syllogism in the cosmological system of *Timaeus* and thus prove that the idea of logics unfolding in the real world is somehow already present in Plato. This operation is totally unacceptable, and only a few elements support it.<sup>19</sup>

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rapporto statico di implicazione tipico della mediazione sillogistica... in un movimento dialettico, nel quale le tre forme del sillogismo analizzate nella sezione della Soggettività, si succedono secondo la loro specifica modalità. In tale successione i giudizi che formano i sillogismi mutano continuamente di ruolo, e da estremi diventano medio, e da medio estremi."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Duque 1998, 710, *in nota*: "es significativo señalar que esta definición (que recoge y asume en sí las anteriores "todas las cosas son un juicio, un concepto, etc.") es presentada en ese texto por Hegel como una definición *real* del Absoluto (aunque sea naturalmente fallida y unilateral: es el Absoluto *desde el punto de vista del sujeto*).<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the doctrine of syllogism constitutes the culmination of the Subjective Logic.

<sup>15</sup> Hegel 1976, 112.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Vieillard-Baron 1976, 43: "sur la ressemblance (*omoiôtes*) voulue par Dieu entre lui et le monde (30 c-d) et sur l'éloge du 'lien le plus beau qui unifie totalement lui-même

Hegel actually goes beyond this point in his conviction that syllogism *is* nothing but *God's nature*. The statement is sensible if considered in the core of Hegelian philosophy: since Hegel's early writings, Relation had divine attributes—it is the *Mitte* in which all opposites reconcile.<sup>20</sup> One of those pairs of opposites comprises universal Being against the reflective consciousness of the Singular.

On the other hand, syllogism is the logical expression for the reciprocal intertwining of individuality and universality, mediated through particularity: as Félix Duque has written, "in syllogism the *copula* appears as what is rational in the extremes, i.e. as their *terminus medius*, their *Mitte* or their cordial centre."<sup>21</sup> In spite of the partial perspective of syllogism (the subjective side of *Logic*), it has been discussed how "everything is syllogism" leads to "God is syllogism." According to Hegel this thought was first expressed in *Timaeus*.

This interpretation has been deduced from a gigantic distortion of Platonic thought—i.e. proportion as syllogism. Strange as it may seem, that distortion is not rendered harsher by the inclusion of its consequences; instead, it regains the solid ground of Neoplatonic tradition. The Trinitarian scheme had often been forced into *Timaeus's* cosmology, where it found an important obstacle in the conciliation of numbers three<sup>22</sup> and four, the latter being fundamental for the Pythagoreans.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Hegel's Berlin period still owes many things to the Pythagorean texts which had been available to him in Tübingen—and it is likely that Hegel read those texts at Hölderlin's suggestion.<sup>24</sup> Hegel acknowledges the Pythagorean

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et les termes qu'il relie' (31 c)." The translation of a mathematical analogy, the proportion, as the rational syllogism of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* is, according to Vieillard-Baron, "de toutes les leçons de Hegel sur Platon, c'est ici la partie la plus hasardeuse, dans la mesure où elle est volontairement déformante" (Vieillard-Baron, note 143 to Hegel 1976, 143).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 9 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1980), 361: "Das Wort der Versöhnung ist der daseyende Geist, der das reine Wissen seiner selbst als allgemeinen Wesens in seinem Gegentheile, in dem reinen Wissen seiner als der absolut in sich seyenden Einzelheit anschaut,—ein gegenseitiges Anerkennen, welche der absolute Geist ist."

<sup>21</sup> Félix Duque, *Pensando en libertad las razones de Hegel*, in *Razón, libertad y Estado en Hegel*, eds. Mariano Álvarez Gómez and Carmen Paredes Martín (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2000), 106.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford-Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 296: "Hegel is neither a monist nor a dualist. If any number is to be assigned to him, it is the number three."

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Johannes Reuchlin, *De arte cabbalistica* (Paris: Aubier, 1973), 143.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Vieillard-Baron 1976, 44: "quant au passage de la triplicité divine au quaternaire naturel, elle repose sur la théorie pythagoricienne des nombres. Hegel connaissait parfaitement les textes pythagoriciens sur la triade et la tétrade, auxquels il accordait une grande

influence in *Timaeus* to the extent of making the following statement, included in his general foreword to the dialogue:

The *Timaeus* is really the fuller version of a Pythagorean treatise; other would-be wise persons have indeed said that the treatise is only an abstract made by a Pythagorean of the larger work of Plato, but the first theory is the more probable.<sup>25</sup>

That *Timaeus* borrowed its inspiration from a previous work written by a Pythagorean was a widespread belief in the eighteenth century. Supported by Proclus's *Commentary to Timaeus*, where he mentioned a famous Locros's *Timaeus* as the main source for Plato, the legend was still credited by such experts as Tiedemann or Bardili. However, in 1795 Tennemann claimed five remarkable doctrinal differences proved it wrong.<sup>26</sup> Tennemann's conclusion was that this text was neither written nor supervised by Plato himself, since it should be dated long after his death. As a result of this discovery, the acknowledged importance of Pythagorean influences decreased and many important notions were first considered genuinely Platonic. About thirty years after that, Hegel quotes Tennemann but decides to ignore him and lies boldly; in Michelet's edition one reads: "His *Timaeus* is, by unanimous testimony, the amplification of a still extant work of Pythagoras."<sup>27</sup> His outdated claim was, at that time, supported by only a few experts like Kleuker and Stolberg.

Why insist on a theory that had been proved wrong? Certainly not because of an arbitrary fondness of extravagant theses, but rather due to the cohesion of Hegel's history of philosophy, in which Plato is given a fundamental role as "knot."<sup>28</sup> The meaning of "*Knoten*" is quite literal in

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portée philosophique; or il lisait le texte du Timée dans la perspective pythagoricienne. Et dès le *Stift* de Tübingen, avant même d'avoir connu les textes pythagoriciens et proclusiens, il fréquentait une édition de Plutarque, où se retrouvent les éléments doctrinaux sur la 'valeur capitale et fondamentale' du nombre quatre."

<sup>25</sup> Hegel 1976, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, *La philosophie platonicienne de Tennemann*, in *Platonisme et interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), 84: "déplacement des matières, expressions philosophiques nouvelles qu'on retrouve dans *l'Epinomis*, absence d'un grand nombre de points développés dans le texte authentique, précision plus grande de certains concepts, et enfin répétitions moins nombreuses."

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Teil 3, in *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Band 8 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1996), 37.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Hegel 1996, 6–7: "ich habe indessen schon bemerkt, daß Platos Dialoge nicht so anzusehen sind, daß es ihm darum zu tun gewesen ist, verschiedene Philosophien geltend zu machen, noch daß Platos Philosophie nicht eine eklektische Philosophie sei, die aus

this case, as Hegel explicitly states that Plato gathers and unifies the philosophical doctrines of the Eleatics, the Pythagorean School and Heraclitus, and makes them more specific, speculative, and truthful. It is because Plato is considered to have catalyzed philosophical thinking prior to him that Hegel stresses this fact: after Plato, philosophy makes a "qualitative jump," according to the thesis exposed in the *Seinslehre* of the *Wissenschaft der Logik*.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, Neoplatonic influence in Hegel's interpretation of Plato is embodied in Proclus, the only other "knot" binding together the history of philosophy. As Werner Beierwaltes has stressed, the influence of the Alexandrian philosopher in both the construction of Hegelian dialectical method and the reception of *Timaeus* (amongst other Platonic dialogues) was remarkable.<sup>30</sup> Let us take a closer look and determine what are the cosmological and cosmogonical features affected, without forgetting that it is very probable that Hegel never had direct access to Proclus's writings—rather than Proclus *influencing* Hegel, we should speak of Hegel undergoing *convergence* with Proclus.<sup>31</sup> With no direct thread running from one to the other, Vieillard-Baron sees an Alexandrine heritage in a few structural elements, i.e. the fact that Hegel sees a metaphorical and mythical fictitious narrative with explanatory powers in the generation of the world by the demiurge: since the world and its creator are co-eternal, *creatura* are divine and God is immanent.<sup>32</sup> We will come back to this point later on. The Hegelian version, however, should be free from Neoplatonic intrusions in the details of its conception.

The way Hegel reads a cosmological text through a Pythagorean and Platonic heritage is partly owed to Jacob Böhme, whose doctrine of Trinity was reshaped from a theosophical perspective.<sup>33</sup> Böhme is given a similar

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ihnen entstehe; sie bildet vielmehr den Knoten, in dem diese abstrakten einseitigen Prinzipien jetzt auf konkrete Weise wahrhaft vereinigt sind."

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik: Die Lehre vom Sein*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 21 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1984), 364ff. On the notion of *Knot* in Hegelian philosophy, cf. Mariano de la Maza, *Lógica, Metafísica, Fenomenología. La Fenomenología del Espíritu como introducción a la filosofía especulativa* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Beierwaltes 2000, 155–85.

<sup>31</sup> Vieillard-Baron 1976, 31: "il s'agit d'une convergence, et les commentaires de Proclus n'ont pas influencé la lecture hégélienne de Platon, car Hegel ne les a vraisemblablement pas lus."

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Teil 4, in *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Band 9 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1996), 80–81.



importance to Descartes or Leibniz in the *Lessons on History of Philosophy* for no one had shown Trinitarian immanence like him. In his view, Trinity unfolds as the life of the universe, as a transit of the personal Divine, so the world we conceive through the senses is filled with signs we can read as the book of God's nature.

The confluence of so many philosophical views benefits Hegel's operation: the reunion of logics-metaphysics (syllogism), theology<sup>34</sup> (Trinity) and cosmology (the four elements) in his peculiar interpretation of the Platonic excerpt on the necessity of two middle terms. The descriptive sentence:

God has placed air and water between fire and earth; and indeed He gave to them the same proportion, so that fire is related to air as air to water, and as air is to water, so is water to earth<sup>35</sup>

is immediately followed by this other, quite surprising one:

The sundered mean here discovered, again indicates an important thought of logical profundity; and the number four which here appears, is in nature a fundamental number.... But the cause why that which in the rational conclusion is merely three-fold, passes in nature to the four-fold, rests in what is natural, because what in thought is immediately the one, becomes separate in Nature.<sup>36</sup>

The Platonic split of the proportional middle term is due to mathematical reasons alone, the universe having three dimensions instead of only two. For Hegel, there is an ontological reason for the same duality. What in a logical perspective is a pure syllogism presents a further opposition when transferred into nature—the middle term splits and breaks (“gebrochene Mitte”), and in so doing it generates an opposition, an encounter, which is analogous to the relationship between the extremes:

In the conclusion in which God is the One, the second (the mediating), the Son; the third, the Spirit; the mean indeed is simple.... But in order that in Nature the opposition should exist as opposition, it must itself be two-fold, and thus, when we count, we have four.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Manuel Jiménez Redondo, introduction to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Fenomenología del Espíritu* (Valencia: Pre-textos, 2006), 59–60, explains that for Hegel it is important that in Plato metaphysics and theology remain separated, because their unity will be reached only by Proclus, more precisely with his theological interpretation of the aporetic conclusion of the *Parmenides*.

<sup>35</sup> Hegel 1976, 114.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



What is the double middle term that exists in the world and not in the universe of logics? What is the fourth term, absent from the *Science of Logic*? The *Logic* didn't confront the real, existing world. Instead, it broke the unity of thought and scattered the long pursued Idea into the material multiplicity of Nature. In other words, "one, two, three, but where, my dear *Timaeus*, is the fourth?"<sup>38</sup> The answer lies in the question, for the fourth term is the world itself. Nature, collocated between God Father (*Logic*) and Spirit (*Philosophy of Spirit*), is a mediation that functions at the same time as an exteriorization, as the exit of the Idea towards absolute Alterity. Nature is ascribed to the godly Son as another "Mitte." Let us not forget what Hegel just recalled, i.e. the contradiction generated between the two mediating terms. *The Spirit of Christianity and its Destiny*, one of Hegel's youthful texts, might offer some help here.<sup>39</sup> Hegel addresses the failure of Jesus's historical mission, since he denied his natural side as man and gained access to the divine Spirit through this denial only. God Father has the need to leave his self as Christ, for his return may only happen after having gained the alterity. The intertwined truth is the Spirit, the "fairest bond." The Spirit is bound not only to the remaining Trinitarian figures, but especially to the Community, Christ's only mundane heritage on earth. The Community welcomes the Spirit after Pentecost (the most Hegelian of all divine events). Hence, in its own way, it turns divine, and consequently Christ bears the significance of an existing Spirit. Such Alterity of God *in* God, however, has its opposite pole in a different alterity: Creation, World, whose father is once again God Father—and for this we must be thankful to Plato and the involved interpretation of *Timaeus*.

The circulating unity of these four elements (double syllogism made of middle terms that become extremes and extremes that become middle terms, all of it for the sake of circularity)<sup>40</sup> constitutes for Hegel the living God.<sup>41</sup> Should the world contribute to the divine revelation as the unity of identity and difference, it surely would have to possess an intrinsic

<sup>38</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 17a.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Der Geist des Christentums* (Frankfurt-Berlin: Ullstein, 1978), 446–448.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Duque 1998, 711: "la entera Doctrina del silogismo descansa en la idea de que en éste, en cuanto "circulación de la mediación de sus momentos," los extremos E y A han de ocupar también la posición *media*, ocupada al inicio por la particularidad B, de modo que el *Mittelbegriff* o concepto medio (el fundamento o *lógos* del silogismo) alcance universalidad concreta."

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hegel 1976, 114: "indem wir sie auf der Welt anwenden, so haben wir als Mitte die Natur und den existierenden Geist—die Natur als solche und der existierende Geist, die Rückkehr der Natur, der Weg der Rückkehr und das Zurückgekehrtsein ist der Geist.

perfection beyond what is usually credited to the human eye. Hegel, after admitting that the living God is the aforementioned process, paraphrases *Timaeus* 32b–33c precisely to secure the perfection of the world as creature and nature.<sup>42</sup> That settled, nature can play its role as second element of the “gebrochene Mitte” in syllogism God.

Having distorted Plato with his understanding of proportion as syllogism, Hegel was able to enter Neoplatonic tradition while presenting his own theory of a logical pattern that unfolds into reality and becomes true as Spirit once it returns to itself. The Berlin professor was conscious of how far he had gone with his reinterpretation of *Timaeus*. He also knew that those amendments, which enabled the inclusion of Plato's lines in his own philosophical system, shed new light on a strongly misunderstood text. The Christian absorption of the dialogue wasn't produced through speculative effort, but rather through *mechanical* dogmatism under the seal of the “divine Plato.” The awareness that only in Idealism did Plato find the dignity he deserved is in fact exhibited in a paragraph of Michelet's *Lessons*, but not in Griesheim's manuscript. Probably written in 1825–26, the comment surely regarded the *Timaeus* passage already discussed:

Thus the Church Fathers found in Plato the Trinity which they wished to comprehend and prove in thought: with Plato the truth really has the same determination as the Trinity. But these forms have been neglected for two thousand years since Plato's time, for they have not passed into the Christian religion as thoughts; indeed they were considered to be ideas which had entered in through error, until quite recent times, when men began to understand that the Concept is contained in these determinations, and that nature and spirit can thus be comprehended through their means.<sup>43</sup>

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Dieser lebendige Prozeß des Unterschieden und das Unterschiedene identisch mit sich zu setzen, dies ist der lebendige Gott.”

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: “durch die Einheit ist die sichtbare und belastbare Welt gemacht; dadurch daß die Elemente ihr Ganz ungeteilt gegeben sind, ist sie vollkommen, altert nicht, wird nicht krank, denn Alter und Krankheit ist nur durch die Wirkung der Elemente im Übermaß von außen, diese kann hier nicht stattfinden, da sie sie ganz in sich hat. Die Welt hat die vollkommenste Gestalt, sie ist eine Kugel, Krankheit und Alter entstehen also dadurch, daß solche Elemente auf einem Körper von außen wirken, die Endlichkeit besteht darin, daß ein Unterschied, eine Äußerlichkeit ist für irgendeinen Gegenstand.”

<sup>43</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Band 2 (Berlin: deb, 1984), 546.

The elicited conclusion reads that, in spite of the debt contracted with Neoplatonic tradition (i.e. Proclus), Hegel deviates significantly from it.<sup>44</sup> However, Hegel's allegations—the wish to free Plato from misconceptions—do not meet his actual motivations: he carefully programmed the absorption of Plato's philosophy with the ultimate goal of presenting *his* own system as the third and last *knot*—the culminant improvement of Platonism, Neoplatonism and the history of philosophy as a whole. To many experts—and this is a sound opinion when applied to Griesheim's manuscripts of the years 1825–26—the essential contents in the *Lessons on Plato* regard political philosophy or the role of philosophy. However, Hegel had previously composed the “notebook of Jena,” which he used increasingly over the years. In this notebook, the *Timaeus* is considered as the most important among Plato's dialogues, as Jiménez Redondo has stressed.<sup>45</sup> Platonic philosophy of nature and dialectics have a central place in the skeleton of the Hegelian system—particularly as it was constructed after the *Phenomenology*. From this perspective, Hegel's appropriation of the *Timaeus* passage gains a special significance, as it enables a better understanding of the Hegelian system.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Vieillard-Baron 1998, 181: “l'interprétation hégélienne se situe donc dans la ligne du néoplatonisme. Mais elle implique aussi une déformation de celui-ci, qui est une hégélianisation pure et simple.”

<sup>45</sup> Jiménez Redondo 2006, 56.



## MARGINS, METHODS AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CONCEPTS

Martin J. Burke

The point of departure for this presentation on the history of concepts and intellectual history are remarks made some sixteen years ago by Donald Kelley, my predecessor as editor of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Kelley was participating in a small conference sponsored by the German Historical Institute in Washington to celebrate the completion of the final volumes of Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck's *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.<sup>1</sup> He entitled his comments, "On the Margins of *Begriffsgeschichte*," and in a characteristically Kelley-esque manner mentioned some of the genealogical differences between the project of Koselleck et alia and the Lovejovian approach to unit ideas from which the *JHI* emerged. He also noted points of convergence in the then contemporary linguistic turn, or turns, that *Begriffshistoriker* and Anglophone historians were taking. Although a few among the latter were conversant with the *Lexicon* and the historiographical and philosophical traditions in which it was grounded, intellectual history in the United States, as construed by Kelley, was on its margins.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I will first consider some of the ways in which academics, primarily Americans, have been engaged with and have adopted *Begriffsgeschichte* in their research and writing. When compared to other milieus where the impact of *Begriffsgeschichte* has been considerable—such as those in the Netherlands, Finland and Spain—in the United States its influence has been more circumscribed.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, historians, political scientists and philosophers have made use of the empirical and interpretive

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<sup>1</sup> *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur Politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, eds. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–90).

<sup>2</sup> Donald Kelley, "On the Margins of *Begriffsgeschichte*," in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1996), 35–40.

<sup>3</sup> Pim den Boer, *Beschaving: een geschiedenis van de begrippen hoofsheid, heusheid, beschaving en cultuur* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001). *Käsitteet liikkeessä. Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin käsitehistoria*, toim. Matti Hyvärinen, Jussi Kurunmäki, Kari Palonen, Tuija Pulkkinen, Henrik Stenius (Tampere: 2004). *Diccionario político y social del siglo XIX español*, dirs. Javier Fernández Sebastián, Juan Francisco Fuentes (Madrid: Alianza, 2002).

materials made available in the GG and the Ritter and Gründer *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*.<sup>4</sup> A number have endorsed *Begriffsgeschichte* as a method, and a few have suggested that English language historical dictionaries along similar lines be compiled. While no such projects are likely to be produced in the proximate future, the methodological importance of historical semantics has been acknowledged in a variety of disciplinary arenas. Histories of concepts, while still far from common, have become part of the contemporary continuum in the history of ideas. In the second part of this piece I will discuss a number of other methodological approaches, which, if employed in conjunction with historical semantics, could serve to enhance the practice of intellectual history.

It should be of little surprise that the initial, and most extensive, American audience for *Begriffsgeschichte* was comprised of German studies scholars, in particular specialists on early modern and modern Germany. Within a few years of the appearance of the first volumes of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, James Sheehan produced a review essay for the *Journal of Modern History* that featured an overview of the endeavor and a thoughtful analysis of what he considered to be the “broader methodological questions raised by *Begriffsgeschichte*.”<sup>5</sup> In discussing some of the “problems and possibilities” posed by the diachronic study of concepts, Sheehan did express reservations about the utility and suitability of a *Begriff* as the salient unit of analysis, and asked how the fluid meanings of concepts could be presumed to be fixed.<sup>6</sup> Although he admired the high quality of scholarship involved in the project, he was not convinced that *Begriffsgeschichte* could or should develop into a separate branch of inquiry. Rather, he hoped that it would serve to stimulate other modes of historical investigation. Sheehan’s methodological skepticism about Koselleck’s prospectus for *Begriffsgeschichte* notwithstanding, his American colleagues did make use of the lexicon’s entries—such as Rudolf Vierhaus’s “Liberalismus,” Conze’s “Beruf,” Lucian Hölscher’s “Offenlichkeit,” and Manfred Riedel’s “Bürger”—as its respective numbers appeared in print.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel: Schwabe, 1971–2007).

<sup>5</sup> James J. Sheehan, “*Begriffsgeschichte*: Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978), 312–19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>7</sup> Harry Ritter, “Austro-German Liberalism and the Modern Liberal Tradition,” *German Studies Review* 3 (1984), 229; Anthony La Volpa, “Vocations, Careers and Talent. Lutheran Pietism and Sponsored Mobility in Eighteenth-Century Germany,” *Comparative Studies in*

The GG did find a more positive, and more persistent, American advocate in Melvin Richter, a professor of political science. In 1986, he began to publish a series of articles in such venues as *Political Theory*, the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, and *History and Theory* on the implications of the lexicon for the study of political thought, the differences between its methods and intellectual history as practiced by Friedrich Meinecke and Arthur Lovejoy, and the points of compatibility and convergence between *Begriffsgeschichte* and the Cambridge School contextualism identified with the work of J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner.<sup>8</sup> These pieces served as the core of a 1995 volume on *The History of Political and Social Concepts: a Critical Introduction*.<sup>9</sup> Where Sheehan was quite careful and circumspect when evaluating the claims of Koselleck's research program, Richter was far more expansive. He argued that the systematic application of historical semantics to large bodies of source materials had important consequences not only for German studies, but for the history of political thought and for intellectual history overall. For Richter, Koselleck's program was far more than an antidote to anachronism: it was a powerful method for understanding and interpreting texts and authors properly. As an example, he used Dietrich Hilger's entry on "Herrschaft" in order to underline the serious inadequacies of Talcott Parsons's renditions of Max Weber's typology of "domination." Richter argued that Weberian sociology as promoted by Parsons and institutionalized in American social science was based upon serious misunderstandings of the concepts that Weber had employed.<sup>10</sup> In the closing chapter of the book Richter suggested that an English language project, analogous to the GG, for the study of political and social concepts in the United States and United Kingdom be developed as an alternative to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>11</sup>

While the reviews for Richter's text were, in general, quite favorable, his proposal for an Anglo-American historical lexicon has found little in

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*Society and History* 28 (1986), 256; John Laursen, "The Subversive Kant," *Political Theory* 14 (1986), 600; Thomas Childers, "The Social Language of Politics in Germany," *American Historical Review* 95 (1990), 340.

<sup>8</sup> Melvin Richter, "Conceptual History (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and Political Theory," *Political Theory* 14 (1986), 604–37; "*Begriffsgeschichte* and the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), 247–63; "Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," *History and Theory* 29 (1990), 38–70.

<sup>9</sup> Melvin Richter, *The History of Social and Political Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 67–77.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 143–60.

the way of support.<sup>12</sup> Neither the personnel, the institutional settings, nor the financial resources necessary for such an undertaking have been available.<sup>13</sup> In addition, one important group of contemporaries whom Richter has strived to convince about the methodological significance of Koselleck's work was unpersuaded, and remains so. From criticisms made by Pocock in the course of the abovementioned 1992 symposium to Skinner's recent construal of Koselleck as an historian of words, not of concepts, members of the so-called Cambridge School have expressed their doubts about the desirability and the reliability of historical dictionaries in general, and about the methods of *Begriffsgeschichte* in particular.<sup>14</sup>

The metatheoretical differences between Bielefeld *Begriffsgeschichte* and Cambridge contextualism might, or might not, be reconcilable. Nor may the philosophical gap between hermeneutics and ordinary language philosophy be bridgeable.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, a number of political scientists and historians have drawn upon one or both of these approaches. In so doing, they have produced histories of such concepts as "revolution," "policy," "class," "liberty," "freedom," "social capital," "technik" and

<sup>12</sup> David Lidenfeld, "The History of Political and Social Concepts," *American Historical Review* 102 (1997), 1116–17; Michael Freeden, "Ideologies and Conceptual History," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 2 (1997), 3–11. Omar Dahbour, "The History of Political and Social Concepts," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35 (1997), 317–19. Mark Bevir, "Begriffsgeschichte," *History and Theory* 39 (2000), 273–84. Russell Hanson, "The History of Political and Social Concepts," *American Political Science Review* 96 (2002), 795–97.

<sup>13</sup> Martin J. Burke, "Conceptual History in the United States: A Missing "National Project," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 2 (2005), 127–44.

<sup>14</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture?," in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, 47–58; Quentin Skinner, "On Intellectual History and the History of Books," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1 (2005), 33–35; Javier Fernández Sebastián, "Intellectual History, Liberty and Republicanism: An Interview with Quentin Skinner," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 3 (2007), 113–15.

<sup>15</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, "A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe," in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts*, 59–70; Javier Fernández Sebastián, "Conceptual History, Memory and Identity: An Interview with Reinhart Koselleck," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 2 (2006), 108–10; Fernández Sebastián, "Interview with Quentin Skinner," 113–15; Janet Coleman, "The Practical Uses of *Begriffsgeschichte*," *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3 (1999) 28–40; Kari Palonen, "Rhetorical and Temporal Perspectives on Conceptual Change: Theses on Quentin Skinner and Reinhart Koselleck," *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3 (1999), 41–59; Christian Nadeau, "L'histoire comme construction social politique: Une lecture croisée de Reinhart Koselleck et Quentin Skinner," *Cahiers D'Épistémologie* (2005–07), 5–24; Pasi Ihalainen, "Between Historical Semantics and Pragmatics: Reconstructing Past Political Thought Through Conceptual History," *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 7 (2006) 115–43; Rudolf Valkhoff, "Some Similarities between *Begriffsgeschichte* and the History of Discourse," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1 (2006) 83–98. Mark Bevir, "Begriffsgeschichte," 273–84.



"America."<sup>16</sup> These studies have appeared in monographs and journal articles, however, not in multi-volume dictionaries or encyclopedias. But they are suggestive of the possibilities of what Mark Bevir has described as a "somewhat different" style of conceptual history, one in dialogue with, but not necessarily bound by, the methodological precepts and the philosophical presumptions of the *GG*.<sup>17</sup>

As was the case for that collection, the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* also received notice in the United States soon after its initial release. In a very positive review of the first three volumes in the pages of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Daniel Robinson explained that they included both revisions of many of the entries in Rudolph Eisler's *Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe*, as well as newly commissioned pieces on a wide range of philosophical concepts.<sup>18</sup> He was impressed that the chronological and geographical arc of this "monumental" collection ran from ancient Greece and Rome to contemporary Asia. Robinson pointed to Fernand van Steenberghen's contribution on "Aristotelismus" as an example of how the dictionary's essays were organized. Yet while Robinson was pleased with the "exceptionally erudite" quality of the articles, he did observe that the authors and editors had paid insufficient attention to work done by their American, Australian, British and Canadian counterparts.<sup>19</sup>

In subsequent articles and monographs, philosophers and Germanists have referred to the entries on such terms and topics as "Bewegung, politische," "Historismus," "Deontologie," "Kairos," "Methode, polemische,"

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<sup>16</sup> James Farr, "Historical Concepts in Political Science: The Case of 'Revolution,'" *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (1982), 688–709; Arnold J. Heidenheimer, "Politics, Policy and Policy as Concepts in English and Continental Languages," *Review of Politics* 48 (1986), 3–30; Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Douglas Howland, "Translating Liberty in Nineteenth-Century Japan," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), 161–81; Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Farr, "Social Capital: A Conceptual History," *Political Theory* 32 (2004), 6–33; Eric Schatzberg, "Technik Comes to America: Changing Meanings of Technology before 1939," *Technology and Culture* 47 (2006), 486–512; Max Paul Friedman, "Toward a Conceptual History of 'America' in European Migrant Sending Communities, 1860 to 1914," *Journal of Social History* 40 (2007), 557–75.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Bevir, "Begriffsgeschichte," 283; Bevir, "The Role of Contexts in Understanding and Explanation," in *Begriffsgeschichte, Diskursgeschichte, Metapherngeschichte*, hg. von Hans Erich Bödeker (Göttingen 2002) 159–208.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel S. Robinson, "Review of *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 35 (1975), 595–98.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 597–98.

"Psychologie," "Physikotheologie," "Horizont," "Tathandlung," "Lebensphilosophie," "Anthropologie," and "Realität/Idealität."<sup>20</sup> Yet with few exceptions, the familiarity of scholars with the dictionary appears to be even more limited than that for the *GG*.<sup>21</sup> These professional boundaries reflect the invidious division of intellectual labor between analytic and continental philosophers that Robinson had recognized, one that is deeply ingrained within university departments of philosophy.<sup>22</sup> They are also indicative of the continued eclipse of German as a language of learning in the American academy. Students and specialists interested in histories of such concepts as "historicism," "deontology" or "anthropology" are far more likely to consult such online and print reference works as the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* or the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* than they are to turn to the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*.<sup>23</sup> Nor have the Ritter and Gründer volumes found an American exegete and exponent. Melvin Richter did provide a short summary of the project in the *History of Political and Social Concepts* volume. But he was much more interested in the application and implications of Koselleck's style of *Begriffsgeschichte*, and

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<sup>20</sup> Herbert Spiegelberg, "Movements in Philosophy," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 43 (1983), 293; Carl Page, *Philosophical Historicism and the Betrayal of First Philosophy* (University Park: University of Maryland Press, 1995), 203; Robert Louden, "Toward a Genealogy of 'Deontology,'" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34 (1996), 584; William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 344; Mark Larrimore, "Orientalism and Voluntarism in the History of Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 28 (2000), 218; Andreas Gailus, "Karl Philipp Moritz and the Magazine for Empirical Psychology," *New German Critique* 79 (2000) 71; Hans Adler and Sabine Gross, "Comments on Cognitivism and Literature," *Poetics Today* 23 (2002), 219; George Wright, "Curley and Martinich in Dubious Battle," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40 (2002), 465; Kevin McLaughlin, "Benjamin Now," *boundary 2* 30 (2003), 193; Nitzan Lebovic, "The Beauty and Terror of Lebensphilosophie," *South Central Review* 23 (2006), 25; Chad Wellmon, "Poesie as Anthropology," *German Quarterly* 79 (2006) 443; William Eggington, *A Wrinkle in History* (Aurora, Colorado: 2006), 285.

<sup>21</sup> Josef Brozek, "Review of *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*," *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 26 (1990), 296–97.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2001), 264–69.

<sup>23</sup> *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1997) <http://plato.stanford.edu/>; *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (New York: Routledge, 1998) <http://www.rep.routledge.com/>; *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip Wiener (New York: Knopf, 1973) <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/DicHist/dict.html>.

far more invested in the history of political thought than in the history of philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

Of late, Richter has offered at least a partial solution to the problem of access to scholarship for Anglophone readers not able to understand German. With the cooperation of Reinhart Koselleck, Richter and his wife, Michaela, translated the entry on "Krise" from the third volume of the *GG* into English.<sup>25</sup> This Richter and Richter article on "Crisis" appeared in the *JHI* in 2006, and was preceded by a sizeable introductory essay.<sup>26</sup> There, Melvin Richter reprised his early summaries of the contents and the contours of the lexicon. "Krise," he explained, was one of the few articles written solely by Koselleck. It contained excellent examples of the processes of *Verzeitlichung* (temporalization), *Demokratisierung* (democratization), *Ideologiesierbarkeit* (ideologization), and *Politisierung* (politicization) at work during the *Schwellenzeit* (threshold period) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>27</sup> The introduction also reiterated previously made points about the methodological innovations and the larger significance of Koselleck's "distinctive version" of *Begriffsgeschichte*: one that combined historical semantics with structural social history in an effort to understand the emergence of modernity.<sup>28</sup> The Richters are at work on a translation of Koselleck's "Einleitung" to the first volume of the *GG*, but as it now stands "Krise" is the sole entry available in English.

The appearance of, and advocacy for, conceptual history in a journal founded by Arthur Lovejoy and long identified with the study of unit ideas might appear to be a signal achievement, especially in light of Koselleck's emphasis on the practical and philosophical differences between *Begriffsgeschichte* and a Lovejovian history of ideas.<sup>29</sup> But as Tony Grafton has noted, the *JHI*'s mid-twentieth century program for the examination of formal systems of thought has given way here in the early twenty-first century to a more flexible approach to methodological questions, albeit

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<sup>24</sup> Richter, *History of Political and Social Concepts*, 12–19; Dahbour, "Review of *History of Political and Social Concepts*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 317–19.

<sup>25</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, "Crisis," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), 357–400.

<sup>26</sup> Melvin Richter and Michaela W. Richter, "Introduction: Translation of Reinhart Koselleck's 'Krise,'" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), 343–56.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 347–50.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 344, 351.

<sup>29</sup> Richter, "Begriffsgeschichte and the History of Ideas," 247–63.

one committed to generously construed forms of contextualism.<sup>30</sup> Nor, in retrospect, was Lovejoy averse to rigorous semantic analysis, as his objections to the promiscuous uses of “pragmatism” by his fellow American philosophers and his essays on conceptions of “romanticism” demonstrate.<sup>31</sup> Even some of the essays on unit ideas featured in Philip Wiener’s *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* can bear comparison to entries in the German historical lexicons, such as Gerhard Masur’s entry on “Crisis in History” to Koselleck’s “Krise.”<sup>32</sup> If in 1992 Don Kelley could situate the history of ideas on *Begriffsgeschichte*’s periphery, by 2006 this was no longer the case.<sup>33</sup> Conceptual history and intellectual history had become compatible, not competing, approaches.

While in other learned cultures and language communities—in Germany, for example—“concepts” and “ideas” are not necessarily coterminous, in the American academy they effectively are. So, too, are their histories. Thus, as James Sheehan has observed, it can be difficult to imagine the history of concepts as an independent field of research.<sup>34</sup> Rather, conceptual history’s methodological rigor and linguistic reflexivity can serve to expand the options available not only to those writing on social and political thought or philosophy, but to literary historians and religious studies scholars as well. If conjoined with other modes of analysis, *Begriffsgeschichte*’s historical semantics and pragmatics offer the prospect of more nuanced, if not necessarily dramatically new, intellectual histories.<sup>35</sup> From the variety of methods employed and approaches favored by contemporary scholars, three appear to be particularly complementary with the history of concepts, and, perhaps, with a renewed interest in

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Grafton, “The History of Ideas: Precept and Practice, 1950–2000 and Beyond,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), 1–32.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Lovejoy, “The Thirteen Pragmatisms,” *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method* 5 (1908), 5–12, 29–39; Lovejoy, “On the Meaning of ‘Romantic’ in Early German Romanticism,” *Modern Language Notes* 31, 32 (1916), 385–96, 65–77; Lovejoy, “Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism,” *Modern Language Notes* 35 (1920), 1–10, 134–46; Lovejoy, “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 39 (1924), 229–53.

<sup>32</sup> Gerhard Masur, “Crisis in History,” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip Wiener (New York: Knopf 1973), I, 589–96.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Macksey, “The History of Ideas at 80,” *Modern Language Notes* 117 (2002), 1091.

<sup>34</sup> Sheehan, “*Begriffsgeschichte*,” 319.

<sup>35</sup> Liedulf Melve, “Intention, Concepts and Reception: An Attempt to Come to Terms with Materialistic and Diachronic Aspects of the History of Ideas,” *History of Political Thought* 27 (2006), 377–406.

*Problemggeschichte* as well: the history of the book, or of print culture; reception history; and the sociology of knowledge, or of ideas.

In the middle of the twentieth century, scholarship in what is now generally referred to as the history of the book was the genteel, and rather rarefied, domain of collectors, bibliophiles, bibliographers, antiquarians and librarians. Save for some areas of literary studies, its publications tended to be peripheral to the history of ideas. By the close of the century, however, the field had expanded rapidly and emerged as one of the major nodes of the “new” cultural history.<sup>36</sup> Some of the most celebrated champions of book history, such as Robert Darnton and Roger Chartier, were quite critical of the methods and claims of older forms of the history of ideas or *histoire des idées*. Instead, they aligned their work in terms of Annales-style social history and in opposition to intellectual history.<sup>37</sup> They and their fellow historians of the book have concentrated on the production and distribution of printed materials, the creation and social composition of readerships, and on such paratextual matters as title pages, frontispieces, prefaces, notes and illustrations. In general they have avoided extensive commentary on, or analysis of, the contents of complex texts.

Of late, however, there is evidence of a rapprochement between intellectual historians and book historians. Darnton has asked how an intellectual history that concentrates on discourse, and the history of the book, with its emphasis on diffusion, can be brought together. Since both “understand meaning contextually” as a process involving both readers and authors, they “seem to be made for each other.”<sup>38</sup> Publication and circulation histories of texts have not been limited to popular literature and polite letters, but have to be done on philosophy, theology and other formal discourses

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<sup>36</sup> Millie Jackson, “An Introduction to Book History,” *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 42 (2007), 97–98; Kate Eichhorn, “Old Books and New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture,” *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 42 (2007), 342–43; Bill Bell, “Symposium: What Was the History of the Book?” *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007) 491–94.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Darnton, “What is the History of Books? Revisited,” *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007), 495–508; Roger Chartier, “Intellectual History or Socio-Cultural History? The French Trajectories,” in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, ed. Dominick La Capra and Steven Kaplan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 13–46. Chartier, “The Order of Books Revisited,” *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007), 509–19.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Darnton, “Discourse and Diffusion,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1 (2005), 21–23; Darnton, “What is the History of Books,” 495–508.

of the learned.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, among a younger generation of scholars, “the interpretation of texts now goes hand in hand with the reconstruction of intellectual and publishing communities,” as Tony Grafton has observed.<sup>40</sup> Hence the questions posed by historians of the book no longer seem tangential to the doing of intellectual history.<sup>41</sup>

Yet some skeptics remain. Quentin Skinner, for one, has expressed doubts about the utility of diffusion studies for assessing the historical significance of such little-read but widely influential texts as Newton’s *Principia Mathematica*.<sup>42</sup> Nor is it clear to him what the practical value of the history of the book for understanding our present circumstances might be, especially when compared to intellectual histories of such contested moral and political concepts as “freedom.”<sup>43</sup> The history of concepts that Skinner has proposed would be a history of their acquisition and use in argument. It would be concerned with such issues as to when and how the vocabularies within which concepts are expressed have emerged, and to what ends, and by whom, the respective concepts have been employed.<sup>44</sup> Despite Skinner’s reservations about book history, the systematic attention to the production and distribution of texts should produce more reliable and more comprehensive answers to such questions. After all, the original contribution of what would later be known as the Cambridge School was Peter Laslett’s critical edition of Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*. With that text Laslett established a new date for the composition of that work, and in so doing resituated Locke within the political contests of the Exclusion Crisis.<sup>45</sup> And J. G. A. Pocock’s recent volumes on *Barbarism and Religion* have been firmly grounded in both the text and the paratextual apparatus of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, as well in Edward Gibbon’s habits as a writer and reader.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: OUP, 2003). Arnd Bohm, “Aufklärung, Inc.: Publishing in Eighteenth Century Germany,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36 (2003), 286–88; Adam Shear, “The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005), 1330–33.

<sup>40</sup> Grafton, “History of Ideas: Precept and Practice,” 27–29.

<sup>41</sup> David Hall, “What Was the History of the Book? A Response,” *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007), 537–44.

<sup>42</sup> Quentin Skinner, “On Intellectual History and the History of Books,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 1 (2005), 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>45</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

<sup>46</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 1: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 2: Narratives of Civil Gov-*



The book historians' dual focus on the integrity of individual texts and intertextuality can also supply a salutary lesson for practitioners of *Begriffsgeschichte* and *Problemgeschichte*. A book, as Robert Darnton reminds us, is not a "container of ideas" that can be opened by readers "in order to extract its conceptual contents."<sup>47</sup> Nor would any collection of books, treatises, pamphlets or essays be. Scholars must, of course, examine specific instances of linguistic practices and extrapolate from them larger patterns of discourse. They should not, however, strip-mine their sources in the necessary activities of colligation and generalization. They must address content and context—as multivalent as that latter term may be—in the course of establishing authorial intentions and audience receptions.<sup>48</sup> Hence historians of concepts and problems, or of problematics, need to be more than historians of abstract propositions.

Investigations of readerships and circulation by book historians have on occasion been informed by scholarship on reception.<sup>49</sup> But until recently intellectual historians rarely referred to or relied upon reception theory. Rather, it was literary critics and historians who adapted Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic variety of the Constance school when developing models for discovering "readers response."<sup>50</sup> A new cohort of intellectual historians, however, has been more engaged with empirical and methodological work in *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and related theories. The transposition and reception of the works of modern philosophers has become a very lively field. Significant articles and monographs on topics such as the receptions of Kierkegaard and Heidegger in France, on translations of Nietzsche and

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ernment (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 3: The First Decline and Fall* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 4: Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008); *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 5: Savages and Empires* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Darnton, "What is the History of Books," 23.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Burke, "Context in Context," *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002), 152–77.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> *New Directions in American Reception Study*, eds. Philip Goldstein and James Machor (Oxford: OUP, 2008); *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, eds. James Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York: 2001); Brook Thomas, "Restaging the Reception of Iser's Early Work," *New Literary History* 31 (2000) 13–35; *Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

Tocqueville, and on American adaptations of existentialism, Hegelianism and analytic philosophy have appeared.<sup>51</sup> More are on the way.<sup>52</sup>

To the degree that reception studies tend to concentrate on individual thinkers and intellectual movements, not on language, they might seem less germane to conceptual historians than to the historians of philosophy. Yet, as Peter Baehr has made clear in his analysis of Talcott Parson's rendition of the term "stahlhartes Gehäuse" as "iron cage" in the latter's widely influential translation of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, the consequences of such misconstruals for subsequent generations of scholars and general readers have been profound.<sup>53</sup> Further, Reinhart Koselleck and Hans Robert Jauss did share a common philosophical heritage by way of Gadamer's seminar at Heidelberg. Keith Tribe, for one, has suggested that "*Begriffsgeschichte* is a form of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, charting the course of the reception of concepts and examining the experience that they both contain and make possible."<sup>54</sup> If so considered, integrating analyses of reception with histories of social and political thought should prove to be fruitful.<sup>55</sup>

Although sustained engagements with studies of books and receptions can provide richer descriptions of when, where and how ideas or concepts appear and are employed in discourse, they may be less helpful in explaining why they have emerged. Traditional histories of philosophy have often presumed that new ideas developed in the course of dispassionate analysis, and that schools and styles of philosophizing replaced each other by

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<sup>51</sup> Samuel Moyn, "Transcendence, Morality and History: Emmanuel Levinas and the Discovery of Søren Kierkegaard in France," *Yale French Studies* 104 (2004), 22–54; Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927–1961* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 2005); Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, "Walter Kaufmann's Nietzsche in Historical Perspective," *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006) 239–69; Matthew Mancini, "Too Many Tocquevilles: The Fable of Tocqueville's American Reception," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 (2008), 245–68; George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2003); Dorothy Rogers, *America's First Women Philosophers: Transplanting Hegel, 1860–1925* (New York: 2005); Joel Isaac, "W.V. Quine and the Origins of Analytic Philosophy in the United States," *Modern Intellectual History* 2 (2005), 205–34.

<sup>52</sup> Martin Woessner, *Heidegger in America* (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Peter Baehr, "The 'Iron Cage' and the 'Shell Hard as Steel': Parsons, Weber and the *Stahlhartes Gehäuse* in the *Protestant Ethic* and the *Spirit of Capitalism*," *History and Theory* 40 (2001), 153–69.

<sup>54</sup> Keith Tribe, "Preface," in Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xviii.

<sup>55</sup> Martyn Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," *History and Theory* 32 (1993), 248–72; Douglas Howland, *Personal Liberty and Public Good: The Introduction of John Stuart Mill to Japan and China* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).



means of better arguments. Intellectual history, descended from the history of philosophy, does acknowledge the significance of extra-cognitive contextual factors in accounting for change. But there remains a preference for internal rather than external explanations for the rise and decline of research programs.<sup>56</sup> The engine of change in *Begriffsgeschichte*, at least in its Koselleckian variety, is the emergence of modernity. It is the imperatives of social, economic and political phenomena during the *Sattelzeit* or *Schwelienzeit* that produce the circumstances which foster semantic and conceptual innovation.<sup>57</sup> Yet how such macro-level structural transformations result in specific linguistic and conceptual changes at the micro-level is not always made clear.<sup>58</sup>

Among the most far-reaching of contemporary methods for explaining intellectual change is the sociology of knowledge, or the sociology of ideas, in particular the work of Randall Collins, Scott Frickel and Neil Gross. Collins has developed a sophisticated theoretical model for understanding the history of philosophy as the establishment and maintenance of intellectual networks by means of "interaction ritual chains."<sup>59</sup> Chronic competition for attention and material resources serves to spur on creativity and innovation, and successful circles are transformed into philosophical schools. New ideas gain and lose currency in the context of conflicts within and among these networks; the content of these ideas is less important than are the alliances of intellectuals.<sup>60</sup> As a demonstration of how this theory can be applied across time and cultures, Collins's *Sociology of Philosophy* includes some seven hundred pages of case studies from ancient Greece, India, and China, through medieval Christendom, and on to modern Europe.<sup>61</sup> The Vienna Circle—with its rivalries between physicists, linguists, mathematicians and logicians—serves as one of many settings that

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<sup>56</sup> Donald Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History* (Aldershot: Palgrave, 2002); George Boas, *Dominant Themes in Modern Philosophy: A History* (New York, 1957).

<sup>57</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, "Social History and Conceptual History," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 2 (1989), 308–25; Gabriel Motzkin, "On the Notion of Historical (Dis) Continuity: Reinhart Koselleck's Construction of the *Sattelzeit*," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 2 (2005), 145–58.

<sup>58</sup> See, however, Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, "Making Sense of Conceptual Change," *History and Theory* 47 (2008), 351–72.

<sup>59</sup> Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Theory of Global Change* (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1998).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–79.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–786.

exemplify how “attention spaces” and interaction ritual chains function.<sup>62</sup> Frickel and Gross follow similar, albeit somewhat different, lines of analysis in their general theory of scientific and intellectual movements. They try to determine under what conditions a coherent program for scientific/intellectual change is likely to emerge, gather adherents, garner prestige and achieve stability.<sup>63</sup> The creation and diffusion of ideas which challenge dominant assumptions is the central goal of such movements, for whom intellectual change is a politicized process of contentious discontinuity. They, too, point to the logical positivism of Carnap and his circle as an instance of how scientific/intellectual movements operate.<sup>64</sup> For Collins, Frickel and Gross, ideas are produced collectively, not by solitary scholars, and are developed and disseminated in contexts of institutional competition, not simply by cogitation and persuasion.<sup>65</sup>

From the era of Karl Mannheim, Friedrich Meinecke and Arthur Lovejoy onward, sociologists of knowledge and historians of ideas have defined themselves in opposition to each other. Thus the suggestion that the latter could learn from these new sociologies of ideas might strike one as odd.<sup>66</sup> Yet in contradistinction to Mannheim, Collins and company do not maintain that ideas are in the end determined by the socioeconomic positions of thinkers. They eschew reductionism, and acknowledge the integrity and historicity of ideas and concepts. Like their colleagues and predecessors, however, they do remain more concerned with the consequences of systems of thought than with their contents. But their emphases on the institutional dimensions of intellectual activity—be it in salons, universities, or learned societies—can provide historians with the means for more systematic examinations of the creation and diffusion of concepts and ideas. Thus reception histories would need to concentrate on questions of place and professional politics, as well as on people and propositions.<sup>67</sup> *Problemgeschichte*, or histories of arguments, could

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 717–33.

<sup>63</sup> Scott Frickel and Neil Gross, “A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements,” *American Sociological Review* 70 (2005), 204–32.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 206–07, 212.

<sup>65</sup> Neil Gross, “Richard Rorty’s Pragmatism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Ideas,” *Theory and Society* 32 (2003), 93–148; Gross, *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Jerome B. Schneewind, “Globalization and the History of Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66 (2005), 177.

<sup>67</sup> William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2006); Andrew Warwick, *Masters of Theory: Cambridge and the Rise of Mathematical Physics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Nils Gilman,

also benefit from such approaches. No matter how infelicitous the term “interaction ritual chains” might be, it could help to explain *translatio studiorum* as the genesis of networks of learning, and the transmission of recursive questions, through intergenerational communities.<sup>68</sup> These explanatory factors need not trump internal ones, but they should not be ignored. *Begriffsgeschichte* of the Koselleckian variety as redacted by Richter presumes, after W. B. Gallie, that concepts are essentially contested.<sup>69</sup> Randall Collins has developed a theory of the “acrimoniousness of intellectual disputes” which could be used to situate conceptual contestation in institutional and professional contexts.<sup>70</sup> And one might, after Frickel and Gross, recount the Cambridge School’s rejection of orthodox methods for studying the history of political thought and its ascent to disciplinary power as the actions of a scientific/intellectual movement.

Recommending different modes and models of historical analysis is far easier than doing the required research—let alone the rethinking—which would of necessity be involved. So, too, is delivering exhortations to pursue interdisciplinary work. Yet composing a retrospective and prospective piece such as this paper has allowed me the opportunity to appreciate just how creative previous generations of scholars have been, and to anticipate what the contours of future works might be. When writing their histories of concepts and ideas, Lovejoy, Ritter, Koselleck and even the circumspect Kelley ventured well past the boundaries of their respective disciplines. We would do well to emulate them.

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*Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, JHU Press, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> Steve Fuller, “One Small Step for Philosophy, One Giant Leap for the Sociology of Knowledge,” *Contemporary Sociology* 28 (1999), 277–80; Mario Bunge, “Philosophy Sociologized,” *Contemporary Sociology* 28 (1999), 280–81; Charles Radding, “Review of *The Sociology of Philosophies*,” *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), 165–66.

<sup>69</sup> W. B. Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1956), 167–98.

<sup>70</sup> Randall Collins, “On the Acrimoniousness of Intellectual Debates,” *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002), 47–70.



EPILOGUE  
*TRANSLATIO STUDIORUM* IN THE FUTURE

Riccardo Pozzo

Let us imagine a young researcher who is under contract with a publisher for a volume on, say, “cosmopolitanism.” He or she will first delve into a mass of critical editions, translations, monographs, articles, and encyclopedias, as well as online references. The outcome will be a seventy-page booklet, of which two hundred copies will be printed and read by a similar number of researchers, lecturers and members of the public. The example shows, however, how researchers, publishers, and readers used to work in the twentieth century. We are now in the twenty-first and we can do so much better. We can think of relying very soon on a hypertext of philosophical and scientific sources, which will provide metadata-rich and fully interoperable sources, translations, bibliographies, indexes, lexica, and encyclopedias. Users will begin at the top level by perusing general narratives, from where they will follow the links to details of critical editions, their translations in at least six languages, articles, indices, and monographs. It will produce an ongoing transactive exchange of information, debate and knowledge among students of all faculties and scholars, thus helping to increase knowledge and appreciation among citizens—especially young people—of their shared yet diverse cultural heritage.

First, humanities will no longer depend on paper. The interface device will be entirely digitized. Second, the information the researcher gathers will be complete, for the search engines will run through recursive series. Third, the role itself of the researcher will lose its relevance, as instead of having one writer and two hundred readers, we will have two hundred writers able to produce their own reconstruction of the history of the concept of cosmopolitanism. In this way, we will have more interactive readers, for the future of digital humanities is about empowering. And what is more, we will have no need to have any booklet printed, as the social benefit of having two hundred people find out about a relevant political category like cosmopolitanism will be achieved through the exercise they have managed for themselves. The leading idea is that all citizens of whatever state ought to have at least once in their lives the experience of what is a philosophical argument on cosmopolitanism, i.e. an argument that is

neither based on confessional or political choices, nor on material interests or whims of fashion, and is nonetheless related to vitally important problems. In fact, every young person ought to experience philosophy at least once, as this experience will give him or her meaningful orientations as regards what to do later in life. I am talking about the ability and the empathy associated with picking up new languages, translating, and last but not least gaining insights about one's own cultural identity on the basis of a dialogue-based exchange.

At stake is the development of cultural terminologies and transdisciplinary ideas, which arise from the necessity of establishing the continuity of a cultural tradition by transcribing it into completely new contexts. Characteristic is the emphasis on confronting one's own tradition with the tradition of one's neighbour, alongside what has been known as the cultural melting pot already spoken about by Plato in the *Timaeus* (23c) with regard to the translation of the art of writing from Atlantis to Egypt and from Egypt to Greece. This prefigures the translation of Greek words, culture, and thoughts into the Latin renderings of Cicero and Boethius, and the dynamics of the great Mediterranean cultural transmission of philosophical, religious, and medical texts from Greek and Hebrew into Arabic, Latin, and the vernacular languages of Europe.

When Boethius set out to translate Aristotle into Latin, he was motivated to do so in order, first, to keep alive the Latin classical tradition and, second, to modernize it by through transcription into the new contexts opened up by the paradigmatic acceptance of Aristotelianism. When Kant chose to repropose Greek terms such as *phenomenon* and *noumenon* he did so because he wished, first, to keep up the tradition of writing on philosophy in German, a tradition that had its classical references in Master Eckhart and Martin Luther, and second, to revitalize it by transcribing it into the new context of his own Copernican Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

In the globalized world of the near future, the idea of *translatio studiorum* makes mutual enrichment possible. We must learn to embrace an intercultural identity rather than an arbitrary "thick" cultural identity.<sup>2</sup> Think of a second-generation Chinese immigrant who attends high school in Italy. At a certain point, he might be asked to read a text by Plato,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tullio Gregory, *Origini della terminologia filosofica moderna* (Florence: Olschki, 2007), 39–40, 57–58. See also Annarita Liburdi, *Per una storia del Lessico Intellettuale Europeo* (Rome: Lessico Intellettuale Europeo, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3–30; Steven Vertovec, *Migration* (London: Routledge, 2010).

e.g., the *Apology of Socrates*, which he shall first do in Italian and later perhaps also in the Greek original or in Marsilio Ficino's Latin rendering. The point is that the student be given the chance of accessing the same text also in Chinese, for he or she ought to be able to start in his or her Chinese-speaking family a discussion on Socrates. Inversely, school-mates ought to seize the opportunity for appropriating some aspects of Chinese philosophy on the basis of references indicated by our student. Texts are the very heart of the unity in diversity of multilingual and multicultural societies. Keeping to the centrality of texts is a neo-humanistic endeavor, the common ground of congruence being the exchange of thoughts, the discourse, and the debates on texts that have come to us a long way.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Riccardo Pozzo, "Translatio Studiorum e identitat intelectual de Europa," in *Palabras, conceptos, ideas: Estudios sobre historia conceptual*, ed. Faustino Oncina (Barcelona: Herder, 2010), 259–75.





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